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November 1st

Adventure

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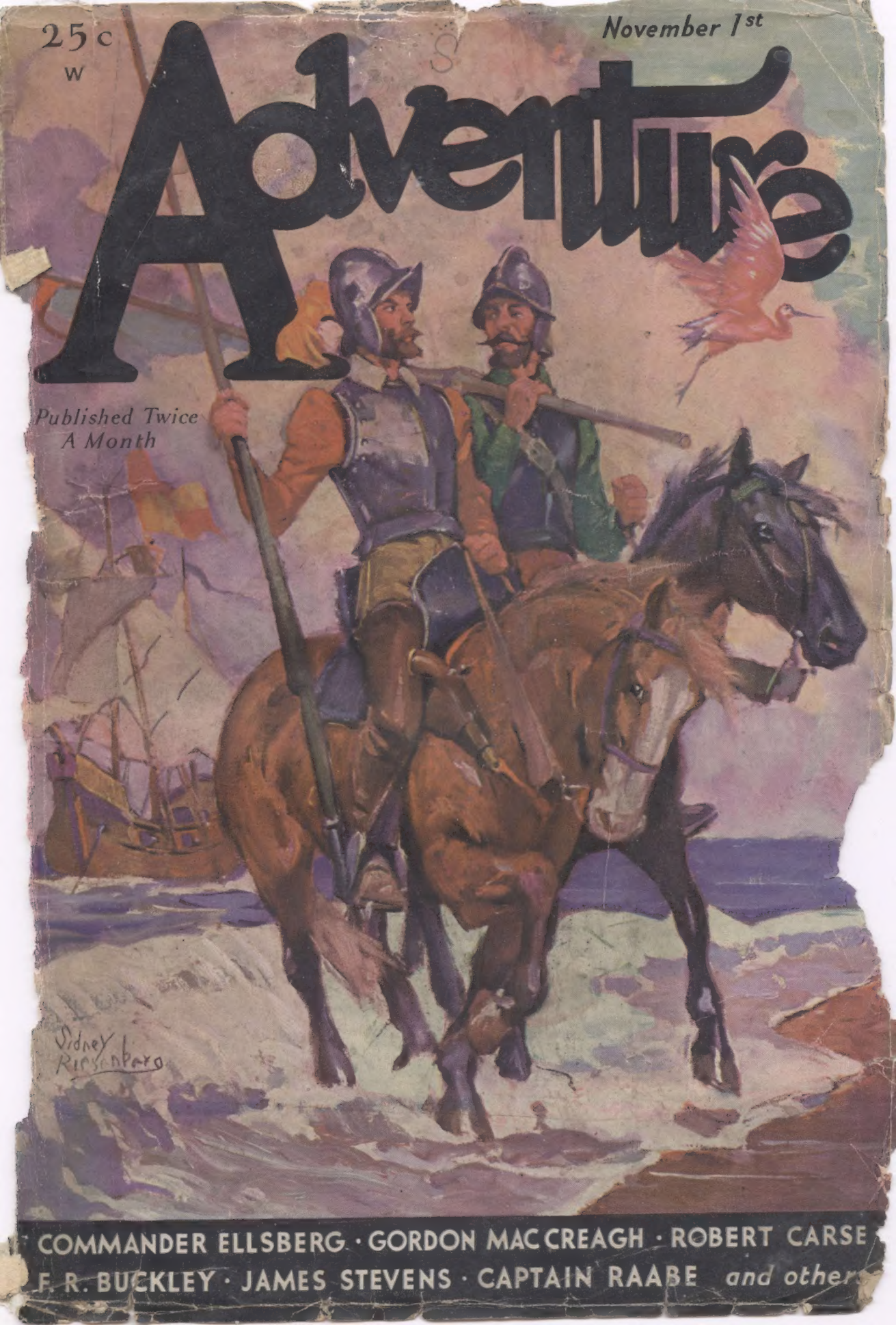

COMMANDER ELLSBERG · GORDON MACCREAGH · ROBERT CARSE
F. R. BUCKLEY · JAMES STEVENS · CAPTAIN RAABE *and others*

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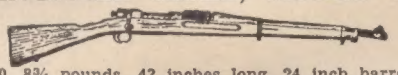

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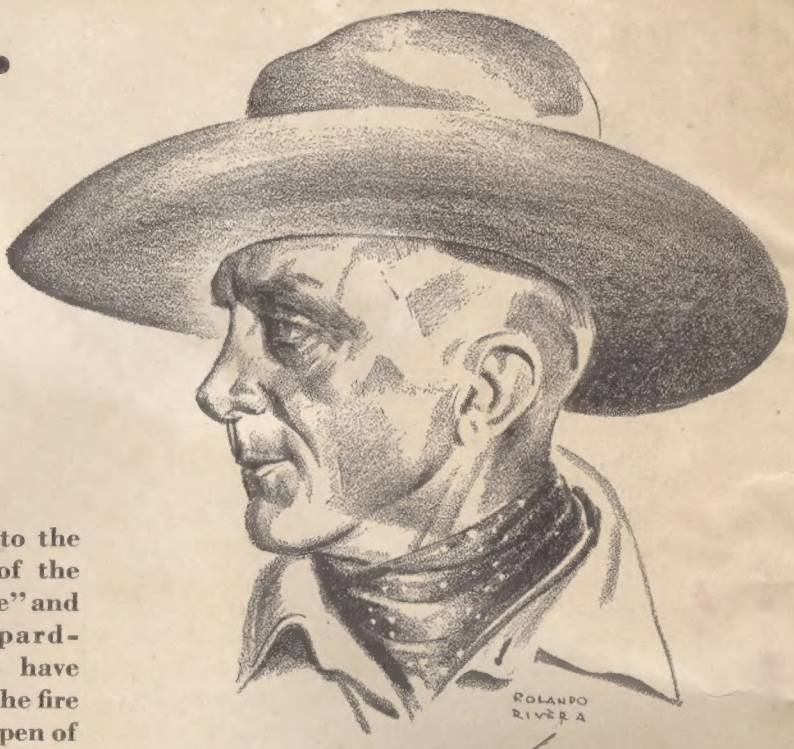

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NO SUN came into that place. Above the prison stretched a rusty shed of tin and steel. On the spread of metal the sun's heat gathered and concentrated, at last to press down upon the men in the cells below. At night, when the land breeze blew off the jungle and the sun was gone from the sea, that heat was still there, heavy and terrible. Only near dawn did it dissipate, just before the return of the sun.

It was high now, the sun. Rorke knew that, although he had not seen it for nineteen months. Those months had told him how to gage its power, and to wait in a sort of numb expectancy for its passing. Where he sat now on the edge of his plank bunk, sweat rolled and dripped from him, forming small rivulets along the caverns of his cheeks and chest. Heat that was almost fluid in its weight and closeness converged upon his body from all sides, from the stone walls and floor of his cell, from the tin roof overhead.

He lifted his eyes toward the six bars covering his cell, toward the nearly red hot metal of the roof. Hour in, hour out, as he would count the beats of a clock, he had been counting the paces of the guards as they traversed back and forth above. It was almost time; the heat was at its worst. In a moment or so, aroused by what was to him now the inexplicable torture of the heat, Lagere, the bank thief, would start to scream.

Rorke grunted and sprang for the bars above. Down the cell block Lagere had begun his daily howling babble. Rorke hung by one hand and arm, working with the other, as he had trained himself to do, despite his bouts of prison fever, his weakness. Those bars overhead were two inches thick, made of excellent steel.

A Story of Devil's Island

PRISON

By ROBERT CARSE

Their ends were bedded deep in concrete. It was the concrete which had weakened, not the steel. Through years of terrific tropic heat and sudden tropic rains, the stuff had softened and cracked. Just a little, but enough . . .

It was the second bar from the end he worked at now, hanging on with his right hand to the corner bar, steadily shaking and pulling at the other one, watching the little specks of loosened concrete glance down. A small sound of laughter came from him. He had spent ten months getting the corner bar loose. Over eight months more had gone into his work on this one. In a day or so more he would have it. Then—then some night when the first squalls of the rainy season burst their thunder on the roof above, he would finally shake the two completely loose, force his body up and through, take one of his bars as a weapon, crawl down the footwalk between the blocks of cells, wait for the nearest guard in the darkness . . .

Afterward, there would be quick death, or quick escape. With the guard's revolver, with the man's uniform, he might get to the boat quay, and to the headkeeper's craft, the one they used between Royale, Ile Diable and the mainland. But all that must wait until he was free from this cell, free from these six bars and this six feet square of stone.

Suddenly Lagere's babbling stopped. The motion of Rorke's arm stopped as suddenly. He hung motionless. Just within his vision now, unseen before, was a small ellipse of white—the top of a guard's sun helmet. Rorke did not wait; he dropped down, cat-like and silently, thrusting swiftly with his bare feet, brushing the telltale concrete dust

into the darkness underneath his bunk.

The creak of leather and the rustle of starched cloth warned him. He was sitting stooped on his bunk, head low on his hands, when the command from above brought him erect:

"Stand so! Hanging from the bars, *n'est-ce-pas?* It's nineteen months for you this time on Joseph. You know no better than that?"

The suggestion of a smile relined the tautness of Rorke's face. This guard was new and young, one he did not know, or had not seen before. Thank God for that . . . But he must speak rapidly now, keep this man's interest on himself, and not on those six bars of steel set in concrete. He lifted one hand. A croak of words came from him:

"*Bien, monsieur;* you got me right. I was 'crawling the iron.' But you blame me? That mug Lagere screams; the sun strikes hard. I rose up, to find if I could see that wild dog—see you, see anything—"

He was silent. He watched the man above, closely appraising him. Then he smiled more and spoke, running a thumb across the tangle of hair on his chest to indicate the ribbons on the other man's tunic.

"You wear the Colonial ribbons and the ribbon of the War Cross. *Zut!* You know too how the sun strikes, and it is worse in this place than in the Syrian *bled.* Worse for us, anyhow. Me, I know; I can make the comparison." His eyes lowered, indicated on his left forearm the device of an exploding grenade tattooed there, bearing underneath the Legion motto, *Honneur et Fidélité.*

"You were of the Legion?" The words seemed to come involuntarily from the man above.

Rorke's nod was immediate.

"Seven years of the Legion. The same ribbons. Also the War Cross, and also of the Army of the Orient. You too, perhaps, were at Mousseifré then, or at Rèzzias?"

A kind of smile shortly warmed the dark eyes and the dark thin face above.

"Yes, of the relief column at Mousseifré. But you—Legionnaire!" The low voice halted; the warmth went from the face and eyes. "You wear on your arm Honor and Faithfulness; you were the man who shot his captain down during battle. I'm new here, but they had time enough to tell me that. Now—"

"Wait a minute, you! Wait!" It was a hoarse and fierce cry. "They told you that I shot my captain. But did they tell you why Rorke, the American, the man who wore their cross and had risen to a sergeancy in seven years, did such a thing? No! It's not possible; they don't know. No man here knows. And why? Because the brother of the crazy brute I shot, the brother of Captain Morbillon, is Morbillon of the *Service des Surveillants* here; is the head of the guards on Ile Joseph! And you, mug, know no better than me the savage ways of that guy, and why he was transferred here from St. Laurent."

THE man above him laughed. "I've heard that, too. And why not? Yes, and also why you did not go against the wall for the job you did, and only to Guiana for a 'seven.' You were an American. You had fought in your country's army during the World War. You had won the Cross of France in our service. It was your country's ambassador, the old man who is now dead, who got you away from that wall and the firing squad and who almost got you away from Guiana."

He moved slightly, so that he might see Rorke better. That one was straining up toward him, talking to him with a hoarse rapidity.

"You say you know. Yeah, you do—a little. You say you know I got the Cross of War—but how? That's what they didn't tell you, but that's what helped me from going to the wall. Yeah! But to me now there's no sense in my telling you . . . You know the young guard, Duhamme, the lad stationed on the other cell block? Go talk with him

some night. He was a soldier, a real soldier of the Orient. He knows how I got my cross. He was in the brigade review when they stuck the thing on me. He heard the citation read off, and I think he'll tell you that straight, no matter what else he says about me."

"Yes?" The man outside the bars smiled, and the expression of the word, the expression of the smile were mockery.

"You tell me all this, you swear sidewise and back that you were a good soldier, and kept the oath of Honor and Faithfulness except for one moment—in which you killed your captain. But if that is so, why haven't you taken your seven quietly? Why have you forever fought and schemed in the prison, tried for escape? Why are you here now, 'in silence'? And you blame it all on this other Morbillon, the brother of the man you killed. Close your head, rat! Duhamme, or anybody else, could tell me no more than I know now. I've been light with you today, and for the hanging on the bars I won't report you. This is just a warning. I'm green here; I wanted to make sure of you. Now I am. Geurot is the name. Don't forget it, for we have been well introduced."

The white uniformed body swung and was gone from the oblong of pale light. There was the creak of leather and rustle of cloth again, the sure stride of boots along the walk above. Rorke stood there for a time, just looking up. A trembling came over his tall and emaciated body. His hands shook.

"Geurot is the name." The whisper was almost soundless. "Well introduced —yeah!" A savage grimace deepened the lines about the corners of his wide mouth. "Seven years o' mine they got, an' seven times seven more . . ."

He was talking in English for the first time in months, realized that he was doing so, and smiled at the familiar harshness of the words. He lifted his right hand, closed it into a tight fist, studied it. He hoarsely pronounced an English oath.

"The young swab! I was honest with him; I was even sap enough to tell him the truth, go to the trouble of giving him a chance to kid me—which he took. But he should 'a' known; he's done service out there in the *bled* too; was there about the same time I was . . . That don't matter, though; it don't make sense. Morbillon, in the outfit, wasn't of the Legion, and that's what raised the hell. This kid here served in some Metro' outfit, and he don't understand it either—even if he wanted to. He don't want to. The other Morbillon, the brother, is here, and the kid's skipper. The kid thinks I was lyin', or braggin'. It don't matter which. But that's your luck, guy. First one Morbillon, then the other. An' what a flock o' luck, huh? Hell, it don't even take the name!"

Rorke stopped. His anger had died away, and he felt his weakness now, his utter desolation and hopelessness. He lowered himself laxly toward his bunk. But as he did so he smiled. The small showering of dust he had flung down as he worked at the bar was not in sight. Geurot, the guard, had seen none of it.

"Faithfulness," whispered Rorke, sliding out along the bunk, "faithfulness, even if there ain't a hell of a lot of honor left!"

Down the sky darkness fell, slaking a little the heat that had lain upon the land and the windless sea. In his cell Rorke dozed, arms crossed over his face. Hobnailed boots clunked in the corridor outside; guards called out. There was the sour smell of lukewarm onion soup, the clatter of slop buckets being passed and repassed through the apertures in the cell doors.

With the heel of his palm Rorke pushed the soup pannikin away from him, listened dully as the flies who had deserted him settled down upon it. He changed his position a bit so that he might be more comfortable. But his doze would not return to him; he could not recapture it.

He stared off into the thick and hot darkness of the cell, old visions, brought

to life by his conversations with the guard, Geurot, rising before him. He saw again his old marching company of the Legion as he had seen it that morning in the High Atlas. He had been in command of the point, had gone upward through the pass first, then looked back. The company had stretched below, silent with weariness, its only sounds those of the clink and creak of equipment, the grate of *brodequins* over the shale of the path.

Morbillon, the captain, had ridden ahead, sitting his big bay mount beautifully. Morbillon—Rorke's lips formed a silent curse. Morbillon, riding even there as if he were on dress parade, malacca crop across his saddle bow, his white gloves somehow spotless, wearing the khaki of the Legion as if it were a gesture of condescension and not a distinction.

BUT Morbillon's attitude had not changed when the Chleuh had let go from behind the rocks with their muzzle loading *moukhalas* and four men of the point had folded up where they marched. Neither had his attitude changed during all the days which followed. That was the whole trouble; Morbillon had forever remained the same.

He had made no secret of it. For him the Legion was a machine, and the men in it so many rifles, so many bayonets, with arms, legs, brains and bodies to carry and use those weapons. Beyond that, for him, the men did not exist. They marched, they fought, they obeyed, they died. New ones took their places. The Legion went on. France went on. And that was all—all for Morbillon, who had brought the power of his family to bear so that he might be transferred to the Legion, and thus further personally France's dreams of conquest.

He had been a soldier, Morbillon, and wholly fearless. He had let them of the company see that from the first, when he took them over in Syria and they went pounding forth into the *bled* and toward the interminable horrors which had ended in Mousseifré. But he had talked with no man in the company, not even his lieutenants. They received and obeyed his orders. He, Morbillon, their captain, lived alone.

Rorke rose to his feet and paced the cell. It seemed to him now in this moment that he could see the man, could hear his voice. Morbillon, whose family held memories of ancestors who had been generals of France in the armies of Egypt and Italy with Napoleon, and of men who had fought gloriously for a later and weaker Napoleon, never thinking of the men under them, or of themselves, but only of France.

Rorke stopped and stood still. His heels were together; his body was drawn up as though he were at attention. The swerve of his memories had steadied and halted on one scene. It was that of the compound of the *poste* which the Chleuh had captured and they of the company had recaptured—then to hold it for days, for weeks, for a month, with what little ammunition was left to them, with what water they could dig out of a corpse fouled hole which had once been the *poste* well.

In his nostrils now was the smell of that place; in his ears the thud and slam of the Chleuh snipers among the rocks beyond the *poste*. The new sun of that day burned his eyes, already red and raw from nights of sleeplessness and hours of peering through Lebel battle sights. Faint and far away then, too, had been the drone of the Breguet bomber which had come over, seeking them, only to receive Morbillon's answer that the company could hold the *poste*, could remain here without immediate relief.

Morbillon . . . The wounded had groaned and cursed out at that, reading the panels the man had spread out on the ground for the pilot and observer in the plane above. Morbillon had swung and commanded silence then; received it from all but one man. That one, Grieppo, the Sardinian corporal, with a *moukhala* slug between his knee cap and

groin, had refused to be still. He had kept on talking slowly and steadily: There was no need to hold this place; it would take a fully organized relief column two weeks to climb the mountain trails and get in here from below; by that time the company would be nothing but carrion, and this place nothing but a pest hole for the flies and vultures. The men had always marched and fought as the captain saw fit, but now the captain must recognize . . .

Morbillon had walked close to the wounded corporal, ordered him in a calm voice to be silent. Grieppo had kept on. Without hurry and without further warning, Morbillon drew out his service revolver and shot the man squarely between the eyes.

It had started then. That was the only thing which had been needed. A big Slav private with a head wound, Grieppo's blood splashing hot on his hands, had reached for a rifle. Morbillon shot him at once. Three other men, their sanity and courage broken, started for the gate, reached up for the big log barring it. Morbillon killed two of them before it was halfway open; knocked the third man to his knees with a blow.

Then he had turned, the Ruby revolver loose in his hand. Over a hundred men faced him, most of them under arms. He, Rorke, had been closest to him. Morbillon had pointed to the man he had struck down and ordered him, Rorke, the sergeant, to form a firing squad.

There Rorke's memory became indistinct. He remembered answering; he remembered expostulating, much as Grieppo had done. Even some of his words came back to him: the men would not obey; too many already . . . The Chleuh . . . A regular trial before a court . . .

Then he had seen Morbillon's eyes, and recognized with a swift, cold shock of fear and nausea that Morbillon was mad. He had held in his hands his bayoneted service rifle, the muzzle of the piece depressed toward the ground. Morbillon had held the big Ruby revolver. Morbillon had started to raise his weapon first. He had fired first. But his bullet—high . . .

RORKE'S hands lifted to his mouth. Laughter that was more than hysterical bubbled up through his lips. In his brain gathered a reddish cloud wherein a blurred figure struggled, staggered and at last fell. He himself staggered and almost fell. His palms met the stone of the wall roughly; he caught himself so, dragged himself erect and to his bunk.

He lay upon the planks. He brought his knees up toward his stomach, brought his hands close in by his sides, shut his eyes, tried, almost fiercely, to bring sleep, sleep or oblivion, to himself. But still that red cloud lay burning in his brain, and the blurred figure staggered and fell there, rose, staggered and fell again.

He sat up, gripped with his hands at the rim of the bunk. Every muscle in his body was tense and straining. Sweat rolled down his face and was salt in his mouth. His eyes were open. He peered into the darkness, as if seeking something, some figure or image that was not there.

The abrupt and bestial yelling of Lagere, the insane man down the cell block, was to him like the piercing of a lightning thrust through heavy cloud. It was a sort of signal, a reminder.

"Lagere," he whispered. "I almost kidded myself into the shape you're in. An' now—"

He rose from his bunk and lifted up to the bars above, as he had done that noon. Lagere's yelling was mounting higher and higher. Guards were gathering at that cell, pounding on the bars and door, sluicing him with buckets of water, quieting the others who had been aroused by his shouts. Upon Rorke's head and shoulders the powdered cement fell in a fine, soft rain.

It was dawn when the doctor came and took Lagere away. Rorke was

asleep then, hunched up on his bunk. Beneath it, in the permanent shadows there, a white mound of powdered cement heaped. He had finished an hour and a half before; this coming night he could make his attempt, and try again for freedom.

Dawn soared. The life of the prison dragged slowly onward. Rorke sat quietly on his bunk, hands in his lap, fingers laced. His sleep had been deep, and much like that of a coma. But somehow it had not rested him, had left him weak and nervous. In his brain still rotated some of the visions that had been there the night before. Time without number he looked above at the bars. Tonight he was to escape—must escape.

If he stayed here longer, he told himself, once more, he would never go. There was to him no doubt of it. A grimace which was compounded of utter desolation and hopelessness passed over his face. They had taken him, red headed Rorke, the man who had soldiered and fought since he was fourteen, and locked him in a prison, expected that he peacefully stay there. "A disciplinary measure, inescapable in the face of the peculiar and tragic circumstances—" Those had been the words of the old French judge who had sentenced him. That part, the actual trial, had been short.

It had been held in a civil and not a military court, through a strange and terrible combination of circumstances. Two of the lieutenants and the sergeant-chief had appeared as witnesses for the court. They had been the men to whom he had voluntarily surrendered himself. It was they who had commanded the *poste* until the relief Morbillon had refused had come. Some of them had cited him for the War Cross in Syria. But, behind it all, behind all their words and the willingness of the authorities to receive the thing as a civil case, there had been the shadow of the dead man, Morbillon, and the power of that man's family and name.

For Rorke a representative of the American ambassador had spoken and pleaded. He had done all in his power, cited Rorke's record, his possession of the War Cross, his sergeant's warrant. But Rorke had been a member of the Foreign Legion; he had shot and killed a superior officer before witnesses. That, in brief, was the whole matter. Then the ambassador had sickened, gone home, died. The publicity in the American and French papers concerning the case slackened. Something new took its place.

And Rorke, who had chosen to serve another country's flag and had there shot his captain, was forgotten. Forgotten by all but his judges who sentenced him, "as a disciplinary measure," to Guiana for seven years.

Seven years. He had begun them by walking out of the hold of the prison ship and meeting on the dock a man who looked, talked and acted almost precisely like the one he had killed—Morbillon's brother, a commandant of prisons in the Guianan penal service. That one, Pierre Morbillon, told him that he knew him and would never forget him. From that time, he had fastened a personal hatred upon him which he had never since relinquished.

This second Morbillon had, with a terrific, brutal efficiency, commanded the prison within which he was an inmate during the beginning of his sentence in Guiana. He had smilingly welcomed him back when the guards had dragged him in from his initial attempt at escape. And now, through an obscure sort of fate which had taken the form of a French journalistic investigation of the Guiana penal colony, Morbillon was here, in command of Ile Joseph. Ashore, in the prisons and in the small civilian colony there, Morbillon's complete, cold brutality, his utter disregard of anybody but himself, had ended in his transfer here, to this solitary little island, twelve miles from the mainland, rarely visited and wholly in the grip of the man who commanded it. And that man still had him, Rorke . . .

RORKE rose, unable to remain still any longer. He paced the cell. Twice up, twice back. Two paces up, two paces back, grazing the clamminess of the walls as he turned, brushing the bunk, the slop bucket, again the walls. He stopped. He stared up.

Geurot, the guard, was there, staring down at him. Geurot spoke in a voice that was as flat as the sound of stone dropped on stone.

"Easily, you. They took Lagere away this morning. You will be like him soon—and even you are worthy of better than that."

Rorke did not answer; he had seen Geurot's eyes. First they had been fixed on him. Now they were turned away, fixed on those two corner bars. Fear, then hatred in a sharp and rapid wave struck up along Rorke's spine. As he saw it, the words Geurot had just uttered automatically meant nothing. They were for him, to throw him off his guard while the other examined those bars. Geurot suspected; Geurot perhaps understood. But no. He was turning away, striding along down the walk past the other cells. His footfalls were regular, decreasing in volume.

Muscles tightened in Rorke's calves and thighs. He leaped at and clung to the bars overhead, thrusting himself up so that he might see where Geurot had gone. A hiss of breath rushed from him. Geurot had not gone four paces away; was turned, watching his cell, watching him. And now, rapidly, he was coming back, right hand going up for the butt of the revolver that swung in its black holster against his side.

Some inner mental barrier gave way within Rorke then. He yelled, and pushed up terrifically at those loosened bars. One came loose in his grasp. He half hurled, half jabbed it at Geurot, battered the other loose with his shoulder and attempted to crawl through, and at the man above, come to grips with him. Then he saw the downward sweep of Geurot's shoulder and arm; caught across his left wrist and forearm the first pistol barrel blow. The second struck him fully across the skull. A moan twisted in his choking lungs. Pendulumwise he swung for a moment, still hanging on to the upper concrete rim, and then dropped loosely down and back.

He was not half conscious when the one-eyed Tonkinois hospital orderly shook and dragged him to his feet. He was not yet fully conscious when the pair of guards who had been conducting him stepped back, and he stood reeling before Pierre St. Raen Morbillon, commandant of the prison island of Joseph.

Morbillon sat in a deep and comfortable chair behind his desk. One other man was in the room—Geurot, pale faced, rigidly at attention. For several minutes there was a silence. Then Morbillon spoke, leaning just a very little forward in his chair. No lines seemed to move in his face as he uttered the toneless words. It was as if the perfect white uniform contained a body that was without warmth and emotions, and that within the exquisitely proportioned skull the brain had become a remorseless sort of machine.

"Number 78939, *matriculaire;* Cell No. 14. Today you have attempted escape and attacked a guard. I have listened to the deposition of the guard, Geurot. His action was immediate and exemplary. For his work I have recommended him for a higher rating and a post on the mainland, at the general prison in St. Laurent. This, solely for your information, so that you may realize that any attempt by you to communicate with other authorities of any sort will be received with complete lack of sympathy. Your case is a serious one, *bagnard.* I have communicated with the governor, at Cayenne, and with the head penal authorities; approval has been given to my order that the maximum infliction of two years' solitary confinement be added to the sentence you are already serving. That—"

His voice broke neatly off, quite as the sound of a well operated machine

might stop. Rorke had taken one stumbling and unknowing step forward, his bandaged hands reaching clumsily in for the man's throat. But Morbillon did not move, and Geurot's fingers released from the revolver butt. Rorke had halted, stood looking down out of the awful, red pools of his eyes. Words that blurred into a husky whisper came from him:

"Morbillon brothers. Just alike. Both swine. Mad swine. You—just like him; knew it when I first came off ship and saw you in Laurent. Yes—like him; and you'll get it, too. Get it—get it—"

The pitch of his voice rose into a thin shout of complete hysteria. Under him his feet slid and tottered. He dropped back against the wall, slipped down along it slowly.

Morbillon slightly raised one white gloved hand in indication and command. The man beside him did not move fast enough.

"Vite!" Morbillon's dark gaze slanted to Geurot's face. The strange mingling of pain and incredulity ebbed from the guard's eyes. He saluted, and moved toward Rorke. Somehow, he thought, backing through the door, the pitifully light figure dragging behind him, he could not get out of his thoughts the memory of what Rorke had said about Morbillon that first day. For weeks it had all been confusedly in his brain.

Morbillon—there were stories about him, many of them. Stories, too, about the other Morbillon, the man Rorke had shot down. Young Duhamme, the guard that Rorke had talked of, had told those stories at night, in the guards' quarters. And Duhamme had told also the story of how Rorke had won his French Cross of War.

Geurot's eyes lowered. This thing, this man he pulled like a sack in his arms, had once been a soldier also, had once marched with a rifle on his shoulder, risen up yelling at the call of the charge. And once in Syria, when his company lay surrounded in a high gorge of the Anti-Lebanon range, he had gone out alone, at night, through the lines of the Druse, and brought back a young and wild lieutenant who had lain out badly wounded for fourteen hours.

Rorke had gone secretly and without orders to get that man. Morbillon, the captain, had ordered him left there, as an example of discipline, for the youngster had led a daylight sortie on his own initiative, and lost every member of his command. But Rorke had tugged him in and had been severely wounded doing it.

The man he had saved, the wild young lieutenant, had died shortly after they had returned. But he had died without pain, eased by narcotics, and among his mates, and not staked by the Druse out on an anthill in the sun.

RORKE, too, had been on the gray rim of unconsciousness when Morbillon appeared, to question him and the *toubib,* who was tending to his wound. But Rorke had made no answer beyond the admission that he was the one who had brought the dead man in. Morbillon had threatened him with punishment, the loss of his stripes, dishonorable discharge from the Legion. And Rorke had fainted, smiling at him. It was two of the other lieutenants and the company medical man, the *toubib,* who sent in the joint citation request to headquarters, independently of Morbillon. Months later, in brigade review in Damascus, Rorke had been decorated by a marshal of France.

Duhamme, the guard, had been in that review, a member of one of the Colonial regiments forming it. He clearly knew the details of that story, but his other story was more blurred, for he had still been stationed in Syria when the news drifted back that Rorke, the same red headed American sergeant, had shot his captain, a man named Morbillon . . .

For a moment Geurot halted his slow progress, rested the slack shoulders of the American against his knees. He bowed down, trying to see the man's

face. It was impossible; Rorke's head was sloped sidewise on his chest, his chin down. He was unconscious now, breathing slowly and brokenly through his mouth.

Geurot swore softly aloud, regaining his grip and going on along the passage. Today, instinctively fulfilling his duty and the oath he had taken as a guard, he had beaten this man back and down, held him from escape. He had not hesitated at the time, or thought twice. Things had happened too fast then. But, now— Swiftly, he glanced up.

"Take it easy, Geurot. Exercise, it is the wrong thing in this place." The two guards at the end of the passage were grinning at him. One, a heavy set Corsican, smirked and tapped the side of his nose. "Ah, it is understood now. You have never smelled one of the animals at close quarters before, hey? Well, garbage is better!"

A kind of flush came into Geurot's face. One of his hands more than half lifted. But he slowly dropped it, and turned wordlessly away, leaving Rorke there for them to look after, signing to them that it was now their task to return him to his cell.

He went on alone, not wholly certain of where he was going, until he came to the outer compound, and to the far gate. A steel ladder led up at the corner of the wall, and he mounted it, stood on the rampart, looking out over the sea. A dim moon played there. Waves greenly tipped with phosphorus slapped against the rocks almost at his feet.

The prison was behind him. He stood alone. Before him was only the beauty of the sea and the night. Quite consciously, he tried to lose himself in that majesty, and so forget the aching confusion of thoughts in his brain—what Morbillon had said, what Rorke had said, and what Duhamme had told him about those two men. But he could not; endlessly his mind revolved those words and meanings over and over in his brain until they blurred into one thick stream which he could not hold back.

He turned from that place and went down the steps, aware that he must see and speak with Morbillon, although he was now wholly incapable of framing the words he must tell the man. As he clumped along the dimly lighted passages, head down, hands lax at his sides, several of the guards stationed there called out to him, warning him that he was off duty, and must turn to early in the morning. He did not look at them or answer. He went slowly on until he came to the door of Morbillon's quarters. He knocked there and entered almost before he had been ordered to do so.

Morbillon stood between his big desk and the jalousied window. He had drawn the blind back and had been looking at the moon patterned sea. A very slight expression of surprise came into his eyes as he recognized Geurot.

"You wish what?" he asked, taking his pipe from his thin, straight lips.

Geurot stood with his cork helmet in his hands, his feet exactly together at an angle of forty-five degrees. Sweat ran along his forehead and cheeks and he nervously brushed it off with a swipe of his elbow.

"It is of the prisoner, Rorke, *mon Commandant.* I do not wish to take any credit to myself for what I did today with that one. It was duty; that is all. But, he—he is out of his head, monsieur. He did not, I am sure, know what he was doing. You will excuse me in this, but I have been a soldier of the Orient. And he soldiered there; he is a possessor of the War Cross for bravery. Other men here among the *surveillants* have told me that. There has been some mistake in his case. He should be examined by doctors, and the reasons for—"

Geurot was suddenly still. Morbillon had not spoken. He had smiled. He came slowly around the end of the desk and across the strip of carpet there. He stopped in front of Geurot, looking at him. He turned his pipe in his fingers, to smooth the hot wood across his palm. Then he spoke.

"You are green here. An older guard would know better. What has happened can not be changed, Geurot. You have done well today; I am the man who commands this place, and I think so. It is for me alone to decide that. I have ordered you to St. Laurent. Tomorrow, you go. As for the *bagnard* you speak of, his record is known only too well to me. He was a soldier, yes; and a very bad one. They may have even made the mistake of giving him the Cross of War. But—"

"*Monsieur le Commandant!*" Geurot's tongue and lips stiffly yet rapidly pronounced the words. "He will go insane and die here. I know that. I have watched him for weeks. He should be taken from 'the silence.' He was a brave man once, no matter what he has done since. I—you, too, were once a soldier, sir; they have told me that about you. It is perhaps that you have not heard that Rorke was decorated by a marshal of France, at brigade review; that he got his cross for no wild display of gallantry before a gallery, but for going out alone, at night, and bringing in a wounded officer who had lain there for hours. He was badly wounded doing so; but he made no report of it when he came back, told no one of what he had done. And then—"

HIS eyes met with Morbillon's, then the glance broke, and he stepped back, very rigidly.

"Pardon, monsieur. I have said too much. I have made a mistake."

"Yes." The words rapped from Morbillon, breaking over the last blur of his own voice. "You have talked far too much, and of matters which in no way concern you. Now, you may go. At once! Dismissed!"

"*Bien, monsieur.*"

Clumsily, Geurot backed out the door, drew it shut, turned the cold knob. Backing still, he bumped against the wall of the passage, struck his head against it. He tried to laugh then, at his own clumsiness, and what he had attempted to do, but no sound would issue from his lips. He looked toward the door from which he had just come, and his eyes nearly closed, his hands clenched on the pipe clayed brim of his helmet.

"I must go," he whispered huskily, remembering Morbillon's face and voice. "I must get away from here. It is for the American himself. No one can help him; he is past all that now. I—I have been as Morbillon said—a fool."

It was as he reached the end of the passage that he heard the door back of him open and shut. He turned his head swiftly at that. Morbillon, helmeted, bearing his cane and gloves, had come out into the passage. He was walking slowly, his head down, as if in thought, not quite sure of his actions or his destination.

Geurot stood flat and motionless against the wall, his head turned, so that he might watch the other man.

"I was not wrong," he whispered suddenly to himself. "He has listened, that one, for some reason. And now . . ."

Morbillon had swung within fifteen paces of the turn in the wall where he stood, and entered an intersecting passage. That way led to the cell block which he, Geurot, guarded during the daylight hours. In it lived Rorke the American for whom he had pleaded just now.

With an extreme effort of will he held himself motionless there against the wall until Morbillon's tall, stooped figure had gone from sight. Then he hurried after him, teetering along on the toes of his heavy boots so that he might go without sound.

He halted when he heard Morbillon's voice; the commandant of the prison was standing before Rorke's cell. He was close to the cell door, his cane placed between his legs, his body resting on it. In that stone and concrete place his flat voice came clearly:

"You, Rorke. Get up. I would talk with you. Get up!"

There was a grating sound as Morbillon slid back the small slot in the cell door. Then, for a time, silence. Morbillon spoke again—

"You are conscious; you hear me?"

Very faintly, out of the darkness of the cell—

"I hear you."

"You would like to see a doctor from the hospital on shore. Your condition is all right now?"

"Haven't you had enough, Morbillon? Or are you here to kid me into disobeying you again, so that you can hang another piece of time on my sentence?"

"Neither."

"What then?"

"You are all right physically, after what happened to you tonight? Answer me that—quickly."

"Yeah, answer you!" There was a croaked flutter of laughter. "And then walk into some new trap of your making, huh? Go to hell, Morbillon! You—your brother was a low swine, but he was head and shoulders above you. He at least had guts. Now get to hell away from me! Let me be, you dirty rat!"

What sounded like a curse came from Morbillon. But Geurot was not sure of that, for the sound of the one word was obscured by the grating slam of the shutter in the cell door and he, Geurot, was already walking with eager swiftness down the passage. Only at the door of the guards' quarters did he stop. There he lifted a hand and brushed the sweat from his face and chin.

"I am lucky," he mumbled huskily. "I am going away from here, at least. Those two will both probably go mad if they stay much longer here. Thank the good God that tomorrow I go." Hastily he pushed open the dark door of his quarters and entered.

GEUROT did not return to Ile Joseph until over a year from that night. During that time he was continuously on the mainland, stationed at the general penitentiary depot at St. Laurent. On Ile Joseph, he had hoped that the mainland life would allow him a change, an opportunity to reestablish his values, forget what he had seen and gone through in the island prison.

But that was not his destiny. For he saw men, convicts, drawing the loads and doing the work that horses could not do, in a climate horses could not stand. He saw, in the first weeks of the rainy season, hundreds of rough green coffins carried to the "bamboos," the prison cemetery, and dumped there in shallow, puddled holes. He saw things that made him sleepless for weeks, things that drained his mind of strength as fever might drain his body, and brought back all too sharply some of the figures of his service on Ile Joseph.

He had gone to Joseph four days after his landing from France. Before that time, he had only left his home valley of the Loire for his compulsory military service. His mentality was a simple one, his education that of a common peasant and a soldier. What he had seen on Joseph and what he saw here staggered him, hurt and puzzled him. These men who suffered here, he told himself, had broken the laws of France. But their suffering was too much. No crime merited such expiation. Something should be done; something changed . . . There, though, his confused, fevered brain stopped, as if before a blank and sheer wall.

But he became, wholly without his knowing it, uncertain in his decisions and judgments concerning what was right, and what was wrong. He became slightly slack about his duties, allowed the convicts under his charge small pleasures and relaxations. And so, in the eyes of his superiors, he became what was recognized as a mildly dangerous figure, and a man not to be fully trusted with the duties demanded of him. The director of the prison he worked in and the chief guard who was his direct superior, held several conferences concerning him. He was not, those two men decided, the first of the type; the symp-

toms were well known, easily recognizable. And right now he was not the sort of man to have acting in the prison service in or around St. Laurent; a man like him, in his mental condition, might readily talk, and more readily say the wrong thing.

A reactionary wing in the Chamber of Deputies was again stirring up another furor at home about the entire administration of the Devil's Island colony. During the past two or three years members of the civilian colony and *libérés,* men who had finished their sentences, had returned to France with tales of prison brutality. The more terrible of those stories had centered around Morbillon, director of one of the prison depots in St. Laurent. Morbillon had already made himself well known by his tempestuous military and political career at home. His family was famous and powerful. Anything concerning him would make good news for the anti-royalist papers.

A popular journalist, editor of a big Parisian daily, had come out to Guiana the preceding year, and had written a series of scathing articles on his return, in which Morbillon's name had figured prominently. A rather forcible attempt had been made to have Morbillon removed from the penal service. But once more that man had brought the tremendous power of his family to intercede for him, and the thing had ended in his transference to the command of Ile Joseph, a place removed from the rest of the prison colony, and a place where he could rule as he saw fit, and practically without criticism or correction of his acts.

But the scandal at home had not died down. The Socialist party had made a political issue of the question of penal administration, and the same journalist was now coming out again, at the head of a whole party of reporters. That meant direct and almost certain danger to the officers of the penal service. At such a time, this weakling Geurot was not the kind to have here. Morbillon had recommended him; Morbillon had forced him upon the shore authorities through his hidden power with the civil governor in Cayenne. Let Morbillon then, argued Geurot's superiors, have this one back again. It would be just a favor returned . . .

Through that cycle, Geurot returned to Ile Joseph and to Rorke. He heard of the American during his first night on the island, when he gathered with the other *surveillants* for an evening smoke. Rorke was now known to be definitely out of his head. He had tried to escape twice more in the last year. Both escapes had been absolutely abortive and had brought upon him additional punishments which mounted his total sentence in solitary confinement to more than seven years. Soon he would be like that one, Rossenq, who had before him years of punishment that stretched far beyond a normal lifetime.

IN THE corner the senior guard rose and knocked out the dottle of his pipe against the palm of his hand—the signal for the breaking up of the evening. But as he slid the warm pipe down in a trousers pocket, he turned and looked around at them, speaking in a soft undertone:

"It is an old laugh here, since before Dreyfus, that these are *'Les Iles du Salut.'* Never have they been so much as during this last year. Some have received sentence commutations they never expected. Others of the swine have been shipped off to the hospital ashore, so surprised they forgot the right lies to tell the *toubibs.*"

Slowly the senior guard hooked his thumbs over the big silver buckle of his belt, and looked with appraising, dark eyes at Geurot, standing alone and very quiet in a corner. Lifting one finger from his belt, the senior guard pointed at him.

"All the funny business began after the time you brought the wild American into see him, Geurot. He went out and spoke with Rorke after you'd left him.

And the redhead told him just where he could go to. Result: that one is the only lad to have been rapped with additional sentences since."

The senior guard paused to smile. It was bleak, swift.

"But don't try any of that sort of thing again, *mon gars*. The boss may be acting funny now, but he isn't the kind to listen twice to suggestions from any one on anything. Not him. I know. I served under him on the mainland. He's seven cuts above most of these prison *commandants* as far as intelligence and pride goes, and thinks he's fourteen. I saw the report they sent back from St. Laurent with you, Geurot; it's not so good. You get me? Because if you don't—"

The senior guard lifted one hand and snapped the fingers loudly, looking at the other guards and laughing hoarsely as he did so.

"Stir along now, you," he grunted, starting for the door. "Get out of here, and keep your heads shut, or they'll get you into trouble!"

Four times the next day Geurot passed Rorke's cell before he stopped. From within, where he knew Rorke crouched, there was no sign, no movement. Strangely, that angered him; made him halt in his pacing, approach closer to the cell. There were six new and shining steel bars in place. The concrete which held them was white, fresh. Geurot looked down through the bars, feeling a fascination he could not at the moment fully understand.

Rorke half crouched and half sat against the near wall. His position was one of sleep, but constantly his lips moved without sound, and his hands fluttered along his knees and thighs. At last, when he looked up, his eyes had a wild and intense flame that almost made Geurot speak out loud. But he did not speak; Rorke did not speak. So, for what seemed to Geurot to be hours, they gazed at each other. Geurot was the one who moved and whispered. Looking swiftly up and down the roof first, he slid a hand into his pocket, whipped out a crumpled packet of cheap cigarets, a box of matches, dropped them through the bars.

"*En voilà*," he whispered. "There you go, soldier."

He looked up then. The senior guard, sweaty and peevish with the midday heat, was turning the corner of the footwalk by the ramparts. Guerot was already in motion on his beat when the man looked his way.

When he came back, nodding wordlessly to the senior guard who rested now against the rampart wall, a packet of cigarets and a box of matches lay on the footwalk. They were his, the ones he had dropped down to Rorke—and Rorke had thrown them back.

A curse broke softly from Geurot; he reached down and scooped the things up, pocketed them as he went on, a pulse of anger beginning to throb in his forehead. In one quick, burning flash he recalled how Rorke had answered Morbillon the night the commandant had gone alone to the American's cell. Rorke had refused Morbillon then; and he had refused him, Geurot, now. Nothing could be done for him, and to try to do so would be senseless.

Never after that, until the day Rorke called out to him, did Geurot stop.

How Rorke procured the mango seed which he forced under the skin of his wrist, thus to finally inflame and endanger his whole arm, Geurot never knew. It happened several weeks after Geurot's return to Ile Joseph, of that alone was he certain. But it was a month and some days after he had come back that Rorke called him over as he passed by.

"Come here. Look—" The croaked words floated up to him, faint, hardly heard. "I've got it now, the ticket. I'm getting out of this hole, anyhow. Go and tell your boss. Get on your way; the whole damn arm is going bad."

He stood as he said it, and poked the arm close up against the bars. Geurot did not look twice; he almost ran as he

went along the footwalk. The Tonkinois orderly was asleep in the infirmary room when he yanked up the fly curtain and entered. That man spluttered and cursed at him.

"The American? And where would you and I be, crétin, if we went near that place without first notifying the Commandant Morbillon? Go fetch him; he is the one. You would think it was your brother!"

MORBILLON nodded once while he listened. Then he stood up, reached for his helmet, his gloves and stick; pulled a bell cord.

"Come, Geurot—" His eyes ran curiously over the other man as he said it. "the reports about you from the mainland— You will accompany myself and the senior of guards. If it is what you say, he must have employed a mango seed. In that case, some one must have sold it to him." His eyes lifted again in that cold, quick stare to Geurot's face. "Some one who has come recently from the mainland, where those things may be procured, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

His eyes lowered, he strode on ahead, motioning with his heavy cane that Geurot and the senior guard fall in behind him.

The senior guard carried the ring of keys and the lantern. He unlocked the door of Rorke's cell and went in first, to stand aside as Morbillon entered, Geurot at his heels. Rorke sat upright against the far wall. His inflamed arm was propped across his knees. His eyelids remained shut for several moments, then he opened them, blinking into the yellow shaft of the lantern light directed full on him. He said nothing, looking steadily at Morbillon. Toward him the commandant advanced a pace or so; his toneless voice clashed against the silence—

"You have badly festered that arm."

Rorke's reddish eyes remained steady.

"My arm is inflamed, yes."

Between the gleaming points of his patent leather slippers Morbillon placed the ferrule of his cane, to lean upon it, thus looking down at the man on the bunk.

"You think that perhaps you have bought yourself a ticket out of here? You think maybe that you will be able to get to the main hospital ashore, and be able to escape from there. But where did you get the seed to inflame your arm? Who sold it to you?"

Rorke drew back his lips from his teeth and smiled at him. Small blue veins leaped trembling into being on Morbillon's temples. Perceptibly, his grip tightened on the head of his cane. The usual calmness was no longer there in his voice; some power of subtlety and restraint had abruptly slipped from him.

"Answer me, you! Speak! I will see that you come back here, to this same cell, arm or no arm. I will have your sentence doubled unless you speak. You have heard me; you know prison law. Answer!"

Rorke's lips slid back.

"Why should I answer you, *saligaud* and brother of a *saligaud?*"

Geurot could not then clearly see Morbillon's face; he only saw his hands, swift flashes of white that started to rise up from the head of the cane and in, toward Rorke's motionless body. Before he was consciously aware of it, his own body was between.

"*Monsieur le Commandant!*"

He stepped aside a bit as he said it, as if secretly frightened at what he had so swiftly done. But his voice kept on, "Monsieur can not—it is not possible! No man can do such a thing; no man should be treated so!"

Morbillon's head, and then his body, went forward.

"So I am ordered; I am told what to do and what not to do, *hein?* So! You, who have tried to be this man's nurse before, thought perhaps that I was going to hit him? Very well, I might. But—" He stepped toward Geurot and struck as he stepped, to stand afterward quite still, smiling and waiting. "A little les-

son. Your first, I think. You have come to need it."

Geurot shook his head, very slowly. Across the tight pallor of his cheek, the lash of the open handed blow had left a bluish red mark.

"That was wrong monsieur." His voice was hardly above a whisper. "That was wrong. You have no right to hit him—or to hit me. No—"

Then, still speaking, he stretched out, and struck Morbillon flush on the mouth and they fell, bodies locked, arms and legs thrashing.

The senior guard stopped it. He kicked Geurot on the spine with the metal plated toe of his boot. He sent Rorke reeling back with a jab of his pistol barrel. Morbillon rose without haste. He carefully pulled down the hem of his tunic; adjusted his helmet and stock. He took the cane the senior guard handed him and with it pointed to the man on the floor.

"It seems—" he lifted a hand to his mouth—"that we have a new recruit. Leave him here. This—" he let his eyes pass briefly over Rorke's limp body—"goes to the hospital tonight. For this other I will prefer the charges myself. Later you will give me your deposition. Have that stripped now, and left here. Which is all, I think. Yes—*bonne nuit.*"

His hand rose cleanly to his helmet in answer to the salute. He passed through the door without haste. On the stone of the corridor, heard through the growls and yells of the men in the other cells, the metal ferrule of his cane made an even and mechanical tapping noise.

RAIN from low gray skies spilled on the land and sea when Rorke was returned to Joseph from the shore hospital. Folds of flesh pouched loosely about his eyes and chin. The last copperish tinge had gone from his hair; it was a dirty white color. Along one arm, still carried in a sling, ran a wide red weal, where the surgeons had operated and surprisingly saved the limb.

His feet dragged and he tottered from side to side as they conducted him up the boat steps and through the geometrical windings of the passages. Only when the senior guard leaned down to unlock the door of his new cell did Rorke raise his head. The number, 15, was painted above the portal in white characters. As the senior guard straightened up, he caught his eyes—

"Why not 14, my old one?"

"Occupied."

"By—?"

The senior guard's lips silently framed the name: Geurot.

"Move!" he said aloud. "Get in there—you know the way."

Behind Rorke the door swung and slammed shut. The key turned in the lock. The big bolt thudded home. Rorke moved swiftly to the bunk, so up to the bars, bringing his face hard against them.

"Hey!" he whispered. "Hey, you! *Alors, mon ancien!*"

Then he hung motionless, in order that he might listen. There was no sound but the beating of the rain upon the sheet tin above. He moved, and swung up with his one good hand against the other wall. With his lips and tongue he formed the low and penetrating prison whistle. Another came back in answer.

"Who is it?" he called softly. "Loquebric, no?"

"Right. Welcome home."

"A thousand thanks—rat. Who is on my other side, the lad Geurot?"

"Exactly. Ever since you got your ticket. Morbillon saw to it that he got a 'two' for a starter. He never even moved out of his cell; they read his sentence to him through the door."

"I heard that, in hospital; Phileron came in with a bum leg. How is he, the lad?"

"Bad. He don't even pass messages for us. Sometimes you can hear him, at night. He has the fever. Malaria, yes."

"He has seen the *toubib?*"

"No. Once he asked. That was as

far as it went. He is on his way 'over the back wall,' I think. Like Lagere, a little, but not so violent. No guts to fight the fever or the other thing. You know."

"I know."

Rorke dropped back. He sat on his bunk, shivering with the beads of moisture that formed on the bars and concrete above, to slip cold and silent upon his head and body. He lifted from his arm the coarse cloth of his sling. It took him several hours to tear, then knot it, into a long strip. In one end he made fast the three bone buttons ripped from his prison trousers.

He stood on his bunk. Holding the weighted end in his good hand, he heaved it up and through the bars, toward Cell 14. He threw five times before he felt the sudden, light jerk on the strip, and knew that he had at last aroused Geurot.

"Hsst!"

"Yes?" It was like a sigh.

"Rorke. I am back. How are you?"

There was no answer.

"How are you?"

"The fever—I can not stand up much any more. I— Here."

The strip of cloth looped back upon the bars above Rorke's cell. Something made fast in the end of it gave a tiny and metallic sound as it fell on the steel of the bars. Rorke's straining fingers found and explored it rapidly: a sharp, fine steel file of excellent quality. An exhalation of breath passed rasping through his lips. In his ears the beating of his heart suddenly sounded loud, rapid. He pressed against the wall and bars.

"You're— Where in the name of a double blue hell did you get that? Why to me? Here—"

"No! You hear me, Legionnaire? No! I am too weak. I have not the strength. I tried; tried for six nights, on the door. Duhamme, the young guard, gave it to me the night before his service was up and he left for home. He made me promise— But I can not; I am too weak. It is for you, Rorke. For—"

The thin thread of the whisper snapped, battered away by the pounding of the rain. For many minutes Rorke stood there, upright against the bars and wall, waiting for it to begin again. It did not. And at last he slid down along the wall and to the planks of his bunk.

He sat with the file in his hands, turning the thing, testing the steel, whispering incoherently to himself. After a time he dozed out of sheer emotional and physical exhaustion. When he awoke he wrapped the cord of his old sling about his hips, inside the waistband of his trousers, thus making a secure sort of sheath for the file.

THE guard, who passed by his cell after the dawn had come, stopped and stared down at him. He was a comparatively new guard on Joseph; to him Rorke had been a wild legend. Now, watching, his mouth gaped slack for a moment. Rorke was erect, in the center of his cell. Methodically, whispering the count, he was going through gymnastic exercises, raising and lowering his arms and legs, bending his body forward and back. The guard cocked his helmet a bit higher and laughed down at him. He raised one finger and rotated it beside his head in the universal sign.

"Bitten by the bedbug, by *le cafard*, hey, wolf?"

Rorke's smile in answer was less ugly

"Just getting back in shape. I don't want to disappoint you mugs and slide out like the lad in 14 is doing."

"No? Well, keep off the iron, or I'll see that you have another piece pinned on to the ones you've got now. And don't open that head of yours again!"

Rorke nodded, smiling, and went on with his silent count.

That night he started, began to work on the great lock and bolt holding his cell door. It was the second of the month. On the first of next month, in small squads of six, the inmates of the cells would be marched forth for their monthly promenade, their hours of sun-

light in the open courtyard, then to be returned to their silent isolation for another month. Between those dates, for thirty days on end, the cell doors were not opened, or even closely examined. The daily exchange of food pannikins and slop buckets was made through the two-foot square sliding steel panels in the doors themselves.

For any prisoner to escape into the passages outside was practically suicidal; they led nowhere but to points where guards were stationed on fixed posts. And no one in the place but the senior guard and Morbillon had keys to the outer gates, to the boat quay and the craft chained and locked there. The only three escapes ever made from Ile Joseph had been accomplished over the top of the cell blocks, past the guards through the darkness, down the outer ramparts to the sea and a waiting boat or raft. The only other way, out into the passages, was wholly obvious and wholly mad.

Rorke tried the obvious and the mad, and won. It took him twenty-eight nights of effort. It cut his fingers to the bone and made of the file a thing no thicker than a wire. What was in waiting for him beyond the cell door and down those passages he did not know, could not know until he was there. But for three reasons he was happy. Geurot still lived, wasted terribly with the fever, yet still alive. His own personal luck was in, or else the guards would long before have discovered the fine, dark little dust of his steel filings in the permanent grayness of the passage outside. And now that the door was opened, now that his luck was in, he might get to Morbillon.

Not for himself. Years ago and many times he had promised himself that. His own love of freedom, his tremendous yearning to get out of here was far greater than any personal hatred for an individual. His antipathy of Morbillon, now that the great, bitter sting of near freedom had again cleared his mind of the red clouds which had lain there, was only a small thing. He sought Morbillon for one purpose: for Geurot. It was his hope, his enveloping ambition now; to save Geurot—through Morbillon.

On Ile Diable, the bell in the chapel of the nuns rang eleven o'clock as he sawed through the last stubborn steel of the bolt. To him crouching there, the bloody little file in his raw fingers, the bell notes were brought by the wind in dim, sweet fragments. His luck was still good. He smiled, slowly and silently withdrawing the suppleness of the file from the crack in the door through which he had worked. The wind was from the northeast; otherwise, he could not have heard the bells on Ile Diable. With that wind and once in a boat and free of this place, a man, men, he and Geurot, would be carried downcoast and toward Dutch Guiana, to freedom . . .

He got to his feet, nearly moaning aloud with the pain of his cramped legs and back, bent for hours in one position. The file he thrust down inside his trousers; it was his only weapon. He mounted the bunk, went up against the wall closest to Cell 14.

No answer came to his whispers or whistle signals. But he could hear Geurot's fitful breathing, thin and nasal with the fever, fluttering high up, then falling. He was still alive, then. Rorke rubbed his hands on the sides of his trousers and got down.

He went to the door and flattened against it, the file in one hand. The clunk of the guard's boots neared overhead; passed on. Softly, his fingers spread wide against it, Rorke pushed the door. It opened without sound.

He stepped out, shutting the door behind him. The place he stood in was perhaps eighty feet long. It was floored and roofed with concrete, walled with stone and the steel doors of the cells. At both ends, where the passage abruptly turned to conform to the general quadrilateral shape of the building, large kerosene lamps burned in brackets. There, continuously, day and night,

guards were stationed. The shadow of one, the man posted at the turning to the right, was flung upon the lamplit wall now. Morbillon's quarters were to the right. Rorke, crouched down almost to his knees, ran that way on bare feet.

THE guard must have heard the slur of his feet on the concrete, the rasp of his canvas trousers. But when the man turned gaping on him he was just fumbling open the flap of his revolver holster, widening his lips to shout. Rorke let him feel the point of the file against his throat. His free hand swept out the revolver; his other elbow neatly clipped the man on the point of his bearded jaw. Teeth clicked; knees gave. Rorke lowered him down without sound. Gun in hand, he swung. At the far end of this passage was a lamplit archway. Beyond was the star splashed purple of the open courtyard. No guard stood in that archway.

Rorke grunted, looked down at the man he had surprised. He lifted one foot and kicked backward, hard. The guard's head rolled and lolled loosely.

"Enough," Rorke muttered, "for now."

He went on, striding stiff legged down the passage. For what seemed to him to be an infinity of time but was really only part of a second, he stood looking at the door which was labeled neatly *Chef des Surveillants*. Then with a hand that was dry and steady he tried the knob. It turned. The door was not locked. He opened it, and was swiftly within.

Morbillon sat writing at his desk. His helmet and gloves were placed precisely beside him. The top button of his tunic was open; a beautiful meerschaum pipe with an amber bit was between his teeth.

Afterward, Rorke was always to remember that Morbillon finished his exhalation of smoke before he moved or spoke. He placed the pipe slowly on a carved jade ashtray beside his gold inkstand, embellished with his family coat-of-arms. He kept his dark, wide eyes on a level with the muzzle of the gun Rorke held steadily at his hip.

"I am waiting," he said then.

Rorke laughed, and turned the key in the lock behind him. Pace by slow pace he came forward into the room until he stood on the little Turkey carpet directly before the desk.

"Stand up!" he said.

Morbillon did not move.

"Stand up!" he repeated. "I want to get the gun in that drawer there."

Morbillon's lips formed a smile.

"You know I will not stand up. And you realize that if you shoot me, you will have no chance whatsoever of escape. You are a mad dog, but not too mad to be aware of that. You want to escape, to be free; that is your madness, and has always been so. I have known that from the beginning.

"No." Rorke shook his head. "That's all over; the last of it just went. It's a different thing, now." The words came unhesitantly from him; it seemed that he had memorized them, planned them ahead. "I've just figured that the best of me was spent back in there. And that what's left here isn't worth a damn. But there's the kid back there—Geurot. He's dying; you're letting him die. I'm here for that—to fix it for him. Get me? Understand now?"

He came on another pace, so that his belly was against the coolness of the table edge, his face and eyes not two feet from the eyes of the man seated in the chair. A quick curse came from him. He shook his head, as if very tired.

"You don't get me, Morbillon. Your brother didn't get me, even in the beginning, before he was fully off his tap. That's really why I had to kill him, and probably why I'll have to kill you. Not that it matters a hell of a lot. The real part of me was through when I put my rifle down, after shooting him. But that kid— I'm no smart guy, Morbillon. I was a good soldier once. But—"

"You tire me," said Morbillon. "You tire me very much. Once, a year ago, I tried to do something for you and you cursed me. If you—"

"Shut up! Close that head of yours, or I'll beat it off your shoulders with my hands! That ain't the question now; that don't count, and I doubt that, any time—you trying to do anything for me! But look at me. What you can do to me has been done. There ain't no more. A slug out of this gat can give me more freedom than ten boats, ten pardons. But why let the kid die because he—?"

Rorke stopped.. His whole body trembled. He cursed.

"I got no way of saying it," he said at last. "I ain't got the words. But what the hell do you think a man is? What do you— I knocked a guy on the head out there. He'll be coming to in a hurry, or they'll find him. I can't get away; from your angle, I'm licked. I was when I came through this door."

He leaned still closer. Beads of sweat patterned and gleamed on his face.

"Figure that; figure that I'm talking straight. You know how many times I tried System D and tried to go over the hill. You and your brother figured me for a rat. Something you could beat and drive and march, and march again. Something you could heave in a cell when it stopped marching and obeying, and that it ended there. You never figured I'd come here, except to pay off personally with you. And you figured I was too much of a rat to even consider you when I had a part way chance of getting over the hill."

He stopped and stood silent, panting a little, and slowly shaking his head.

"Your brother was wrong," he said finally, as if it had come to him as a strange sort of afterthought. "One of the rats had to hand it to him. You're wrong, and you'll likely have to take yours, too. What the hell! What's the sense?"

THE rough flow of his voice ceased again. With his free hand, wholly unconsciously, he made a short gesture, tragic in its infinitude of bewilderment. Morbillon raised up a little in his chair. He briefly brushed the back of one hand across his forehead, returned it to the desk beside the other.

"What is it," he asked in his flatly pitched voice, "that you wish me to do?"

"The kid. You're nuts; you've been driving yourself that way and don't know it. You're killing that kid. Let him be. Let him out."

"How?"

"You're the guy that runs this mill. You know how."

"And you?"

"You know what happens to me, either way. They'll come here last, but they'll come."

"So—they'll come." Morbillon spoke very slowly, and with odd and almost terrifying softness. "Look—" His hand stretched out and turned the gold inkstand. Over its surface and the crest his fingers played, then rested. "My family have carried that crest since before the Crusades—for centuries. Always, the Morbillons have been soldiers, and the leaders of soldiers. That is the word—leaders."

He looked up at the man before him as if he were seeing him for the first time.

"I did not understand what you mean, American, not fully, until I saw that motto there, on the inkstand. Once, months ago, when I heard of how you had won your cross, I understood a little. But you drove that understanding away, although things changed for me then, and have not been the same, quite, since. The motto here is in Latin. It means, simply, 'Morbillon first.' That is it. That is why my brother died, and you, the man who shot him, still lives. That is why I am here, forced to resign from the army, as he would have been; forced from a political career; forced into this service, and even hidden here in this last hole."

His eyes raised. There was something like emotion in his voice now, a faint but pulsant note of warmth.

" 'Morbillon—first.' The others to be driven, or to be killed or cast aside. And

always we have blinded ourselves because we have been willing to die, to give our own lives, driving, leading. And the world is not that way any more. It has stopped being that way. Feudalism, monarchy—words you do not understand. *Maintenant!*"

He came to his feet, stood with his fingertips stretched down and wide upon the tabletop, the gold inkstand between his hands, his eyes upon it.

"France, and the penal code. France—" He spoke as if in a reverie, and talking to himself, in the presence of no other man. "That code is the only thing which has not changed, and which should be changed. A man is wrong until he is proven right. If he is wrong —*phut!* This, here. That is why—the only reason I have survived as long as I have. And that is passing now; they are in St. Laurent again, the journalists. They will—"

He lifted his head, focusing his eyes on Rorke. There was the thud and echo of boots outside, the clash of voices. Swiftly he turned and pulled a cord on the wall behind him. Above on the roof, so set in motion, a great bell tongued angrily. His eyes met Rorke's; he faintly smiled.

"Stand back," he said. "In that corner, behind the door. I must talk with the senior guard; give him orders. So. Fast!" He almost lifted the other from his feet, moved on to the door, swung it open, stood there, full in the space, body drawn up in readiness.

Rorke could not understand all that Morbillon said to the senior guard; his brain was too mazed, too confused, for full and rapid comprehension. He did not understand until Morbillon saluted, shut the door and came to stand before him.

"There it is—done." Morbillon was forced to shake him by the shoulder, very much as he would to awaken him from sleep. "It is all accomplished. They had already found the guard, the one you fixed. I have sent them, all of them, to the other end of the island. I have said that I have just seen a boat from my window here, close in along the shore, and going toward the North Point. Now, here—"

He turned and went to his desk, ripped open a drawer, took from it three keys.

It was then that Rorke fully understood and spoke. Morbillon smiled dimly at him.

"No—" he pushed the keys into his hand. "You must go. It is done now, for me, and I can not change it, if I wished. Perhaps you do not understand that, but it is not necessary that you do. Here—those are the keys of Geurot's cell, and to the outer boat quay, and to the lighter boat. Go and go quickly. There are oars in the boat, a sail and fresh water. Go!"

He pointed toward the door. It was an absolute command. But at the door Rorke turned back, still hesitant. Morbillon was once more seated behind his desk.

"It is now your time not to understand, eh? Well, remember your own case and trial. It was forgotten in a couple of weeks, a month. And anything which might happen to you, or to Geurot, would soon be forgotten, even now. But with me it is different. My family is still powerful; there will be a great deal said, and for a long while, when my time for trial comes. It is as the motto reads, 'Morbillon first.' Perhaps France will listen, and things will be changed. Anyhow, I must try to do it. You see? No!"

He half lifted a hand from the gleam of the gold inkstand, to order and to gain silence.

"It is right. It is long overdue." He seemed to smile as Rorke passed through the door. "It is also," he said, "for France."

Where's the Fight?

By E. E. HARRIMAN

"I'VE SAW a heap of funny breaks in Arizona in the forty years I've lived here," said the old-timer, thoughtfully reminiscent, "but not one funnier than the armistice engineered an' made effective by an old Cavalry sergeant who come here after four hitches in the Army. Good feller, he was, if folks didn't rile him, but he could be a nine-minute egg on a second's notice. He packed a pair of new Service .45's with long barrels. Ordinary, he wasn't no more dangerous than a dry land turtle, and folks here liked him fust rate.

"Seems like he was down hereaway with Crook afore he was took into the north as inspector of remount stock and he liked it, so he come back when he got a final discharge. Way he liked to live, his rating on the pension list would keep him comfortable and there was enough war chances to keep his blood movin'. Bein' only a short rifle reach off the line, with ev'ry dang' bandit south hankerin' for Arizona bred hossflesh an' Arizona raised beef to fill their *panzas*, he could throw in on any ruckus an' be sure of a welcome from ranch owners an' forty a month. Right welcome he was, to be sure, where men was obliged to give odds of all sorts in defendin' prop'ty rights and their lives.

"Well, a feller with a seven-syllable name, an' no conscience or bowels of mercy, run a saloon an' gamblin' parlor here then. Accordin' to all reports it might as well of been labeled 'Slaughter-house,' 'count of the number of killin's there. Seems as though showin' a roll there was identical with drinkin' cyanide solution, an' the alibi was ready afore the blood stopped runnin'.

"Joe, the Cavalry graduate, was on to the curves of the gang in the saloon-gamblin' hell afore a month passed, him makin' his hangout next door where a feller named Mike had a store. After the third dead man was carried out and the usual statement made and backed up that he had been a fifth of a second slow in chucking a gun, Joe got mad. Self-defense beyond a doubt, for there was always at least three witnesses who swore to it most emphatic. Somehow, the story kept in the same rut until Joe got sorta rabid, thinkin' it damn funny each killin' wore the same brand.

"One afternoon there was two of us dropped into Mike's place to chin a while, and the racket in the saloon was hearty. Joe talked, a bit choppy-like, with one ear slanted hellwards to foller the sounds, as a hound pup does, an' all at once his hand went up, hushin' like, an' we noticed the boilin' next door died down sudden. We didn't know why, but Joe bounced up, a hogleg in each hand, an' banged the screen door open with a shoulder. He went inta that saloon like a shot out'n one of his own .45's.

" 'Where's the fight?' we heard him yell.

"Immediately an' to once there was three, four crashes an' some yellin', follered by sound of runnin', an' Joe oozed out'n that barroom, holsterin' his guns an' lookin' sad, like he'd lost somethin' he valued high, an' right behind him come Bill Richards, wealthy rancher who'd sold seven hundred steers that mornin' fer shippin' East, lookin' sorta gray in the face fer a drunk.

" 'The damned curs wouldn't even answer a civil question,' Joe told us, disgusted. 'They took the back door screen an' two winders along with 'em when they left, too.' "

A Submarine Story by the Author of "Pigboats" and "On the Bottom"

QUEENSTOWN PATROL

By COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

"YOUR last chance, Mr. Parker!" Commander Wilson fairly snapped out his words. "One more breakdown on the *L-18* and back you go to Annapolis instructing midshipmen; that is, if they'll have you there. Otherwise you'll go to Guam till this war's over!"

Lieutenant Parker nervously twisted the vizor of his cap.

The irate commander added—

"Two boats in this flotilla are already wearing chevrons for sinking U-boats, while all you've done is to break down on three patrols and get towed in!" He glowered up at the *L-18's* skipper.

Parker waited a moment for Commander Wilson to continue; then, looking into the stern face before him, hesitantly began to explain. He was curtly interrupted.

"Wartime, Mr. Parker. No excuses!" The flotilla commander turned abruptly in his chair, started to examine the chart spread on the table before him. The interview was over.

The dazed lieutenant paused in the midst of his explanation, stared at the broad back before him, then his jaws clicked firmly to.

"Aye, aye, sir!" He turned on his heel, stumbled out of the cabin.

Parker looked across the deck of the mother ship, his eyes sweeping for an instant the hills that circled Queenstown harbor, then gazed down hopelessly at the *L-18* moored alongside the tender. What ailed that damn pig, anyway? It was not his fault, or his crew's either, if the mass of junk that had been squeezed into that sleek hull below there was continually breaking down.

Parker stepped to the port rail, looked overboard. A tangle of lines led from a cargo port in the high side of the *Melville*, disappeared down an open hatch just forward of the *L-18*'s conning tower. Through those lines the submarine was sucking compressed air, distilled water, electricity for her batteries; storing up the vital energy necessary for her next patrol. Outboard of the *L-18* were three sister submarines, and on the *Melville's* starboard side were two more—her litter of pigs, sucking greedily away at the mother ship's lines.

DUNGAREES smeared with grease, his white cap oil-soaked and hardly recognizable as ever having been the starched and gold laced headgear of a once smart Naval officer, his face grimy with dirt and perspiration, Lieutenant Parker painfully dragged his strained body off the top of the starboard Diesel engine. There, jammed between the sloping inner hull of the submarine and the cylinder heads, he had been painfully cramped, struggling to adjust the fuel oil sprays.

Abaft him, in the passage, a weary gang of machinist's mates surveyed the maze of cams and valves on the engines, turned tired eyes on their skipper as he slid off the cylinder and landed on the floor plates alongside them.

"Well, Mac, they look O.K. to me."

Parker, his neck still aching from his cramped position over the Diesels, faced his chief machinist's mate and nodded stiffly.

"They oughta be, Cap'n," replied McCarthy. "Since the *Walton* towed us in night before last, there ain't a man in this gang's had an hour's sleep. We been workin' on them engines steady, an' wot ever else breaks down on the next patrol, it ain't gonna be them Diesels."

"It had damn well better not be anything else, either," said Parker ruefully. "The Old Man just got through giving me hell on the *Melville*. What ails this tub, anway? The other pigs've managed to keep on moving."

"The way she's built, I guess," answered McCarthy "She's a war baby. Some shipyard made a record on 'er—built 'er complete in four months from duct keel to connin' tower; sorta stunt to show how they was doin' their bit to win the war. An' this is the result. Nothin's right. When it's not one thing bustin' down, it's two. I wisht I was back on a battlewagon. This bucket's gonna be our finish sure."

"Not if I know it," snapped the skipper. "You carried out your orders, Mac?"

"Yeh, I done what you said. There ain't a piece o' machinery inside this hull that us engineers ain't gone over to make sure she's right. Up for'd, Fuller an' the torpedo gang's done the same fer their gear; an' Sparks here's gone over the electric outfit from stem to stern. Nothin' in the boat that we could git hands on ain't been overhauled; only the rudders an' the gear outside's left. If you want that inspected you'll have to put the boat in drydock. An' lemme tell you, Cap'n, the crew's all shot. They ain't had no rest fer forty-eight hours; the first thing you know, they'll be goin' to sleep standin' up."

"No, Mac, we can't drydock her. Orders are to sail at dusk. Turn all hands in except the watch; let 'em get what rest they can till we get out. There'll be mighty little rest for 'em once we're out playing hide and seek with Fritzie!"

A VAGUE mass loomed in the darkness off the starboard beam. Lieutenant Parker glanced up hastily at it. Daunt Rock. They were passing through the rocky cleft that formed the entrance to Queenstown harbor.

"Right a little!"

"Right a little, sir!" echoed the quartermaster, and swung the steering controller over for a moment.

"Steady now. Follow the lights."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Ahead in the darkness two faint points, perhaps a hundred yards apart, gleamed fitfully, bobbing up and down against the black background of the night—the hooded sternlights of the two mine-sweepers clearing a safe passage to the open sea for the *L-18*. Between those boats a wire cable sawed through the depths, sweeping for mines sowed by enemy submarines outside the harbor.

Anxiously Parker watched the steering, keeping always in the wake of that sweep. At half speed the *L-18* plowed through the night, a safe mile astern of her shepherding convoy.

The submarine started to pitch sluggishly as she met the ocean waves; spray broke over the chariot bridge, drenched the quartermaster and soaked the officer crouching behind him in the confined space between the binnacle and the periscope shears; a trickle of water ran down the open hatch at their feet, gathering in a little pool in the control room below. Parker pulled the helmet of his wind breaker lower over his forehead, wiped the salt spray from his eyes, peered steadily ahead over the binnacle, conning the ship to keep it squarely between those protecting lights.

A thud, a distant roar; a cloud of white foam shone for an instant against the black water ahead; the light on their port bow danced violently a few sec-

onds. The *L-18* shook uneasily a moment, then settled down again to the steady pounding of her Diesels.

"Another egg," muttered Parker. "Funny how the Heinies always know when a ship's coming out."

"Easy enough, Skipper," growled the quartermaster, his eyes glued on the patch of froth ahead where the mine had exploded. "Queenstown's full o' spies. Lucky fer us we had them sweeps. That egg was right in our path!"

Parker nodded. Lucky, yes. For the *L-18* was steaming squarely through a roiled mass of foam, standing out sharply in the dark ocean. He glanced ahead. There were the twin lights, a hundred yards apart, moving steadily on through the night as if nothing had happened. He owed his luck to the mine-sweepers, unromantic trawlers manned by fishermen, steaming unconcernedly through the minefields clearing a path for the fighting ships. Parker shook his head. A tough life on those sweeps. Fine chance of striking mines themselves. Of course, their light draft allowed them to steam right over a mine without contacting it. That is, if Heinie had his mines all set at the right depths. But occasionally he didn't, and one floated too close to the surface for even a light draft trawler to pass over. A tough life on those mine-sweeps. He shook his head again. Not for him.

"We're clear, Cap'n. The sweeps is headin' back!" mumbled the helmsman.

Parker turned, looked over the edge of the chariot bridge. The lights ahead had veered to port, stopped while they heaved in their kites and reeled in the sweep wire. A sharp flicker of light pierced the darkness; a blinker tube was flashing at them from the wheelhouse of the nearest vessel. In dots and dashes came the message—

"Good luck!"

The flickering ceased, the dim guide lights on the trawlers were suddenly turned off, the *L-18* pounded ahead through the darkness into the open sea. They were clear, in water so deep the Germans could not anchor mines. A brief command, the *L-18* turned to starboard, headed for the seas to the west of Ireland where the troopships of America, jammed full of doughboys, were rushing reenforcements to the hard pressed Western Front.

"Good luck!" Parker repeated the message gloomily, strained his eyes ahead where the low bow of his submarine plunged into the seas.

Good luck! The *L-18* had meant anything but that to him so far. Would she hang together this cruise? His last chance. Disconsolately he wondered what a tour on Guam was like. A mere speck in the Pacific, no place for an officer in wartime. He gripped the rail, stared ahead into the night. No tour on Guam for him!

"SILENCE in the boat!"

At diving stations, the crew of the *L-18* leaned tensely over their controls. The pounding of the Diesels ceased suddenly. A strange quiet gripped the hull, broken only by the sharp hiss of air whistling out the vents as the *L-18* went awash.

In the center of the control room McCarthy heaved round on a huge valve wheel, screwing home the main air inlet to the Diesels. A bang, the quartermaster above slammed the conning tower hatch, slid down the ladder into the control room, gripped the steering lever.

With his eyes glued to the depth gage on the port bulkhead, Parker watched as the needle registered their sinking.

McCarthy gave his valve a final twist, reported—

"Outboard ventilation valve secured, sir!"

Parker nodded. Twenty feet, the deck was just going under.

"Ready on the main motors, sir!"

"One third ahead!" Without taking his eyes from the gage, the skipper stepped to the periscope, watched their rapidly increasing depth.

The hiss of air ceased, a tiny jet of

water shot out the telltale from the ballast vent line. A seaman hastily closed the cock, called out—

"Ballast tanks flooded, sir."

"Aye, aye. Close all the vents!"

More valves were hurriedly screwed down, reported closed. The *L-18* kept sinking. Forty feet on the gage.

"Enough!" called Parker sharply. "Hold her at forty. Standard speed, both motors."

Diving wheels twirled; down went the controllers; the whir of electric motors filled the boat. Parker pressed a button. A slight grinding broke out as the periscope tube rose slowly from the well at his feet, came to full elevation, stopped. He pressed his face against the rubber eyepiece, looked out.

A few faint streaks of red glowed in the east, lighting dimly the dark circle of sky and sea visible through the periscope. The day was breaking. He swung his lens around, swept the horizon. Nothing in sight.

For the hundredth time Parker looked at the crumpled radio message on the chartboard. He knew it by heart now.

FROM: C IN C, QUEENSTOWN.
TO: U.S.S. *L-18*.
U-6 REPORTED OPERATING IN YOUR SQUARE STOP USE UTMOST ENDEAVORS TO MAKE CONTACT.

Parker smiled ruefully. Only too well he realized the *U-6* was there. Would he ever forget those drifting corpses he had glimpsed yesterday, the sightless eyes staring down his periscope, the gray sea dotted with the bloated bodies of men and horses through which he had picked his way gingerly as the *L-18* swam slowly through the wreckage where the torpedoed *Morentic* had gone down? Yes, the *U-6* was in his square.

And if it had not been for that destroyer, he might have made the contact the C in C was so anxious about. He groaned at the recollection. Infernal luck! Midnight, the *L-18* was cruising slowly awash, her engines barely turning, all hands on the bridge straining their ears for the pounding of Diesels.

Their enemy, they knew, must be on the surface somewhere, running engines full power recharging batteries for his next day's work. The *L-18* had caught her radio code signals, reporting no doubt to far off Germany her success in sinking the horse transport; had heard her chattering the gossip of the war zone with sister U-boats scattered over the seas off Ireland. Strong signals—she was close to them. Cautiously Parker had zigzagged back and forth, seeking the bearing on which his antennæ caught the signals loudest, then headed carefully in on that bearing. He remembered the sudden thrill when a familiar throb came to them faintly across the heaving seas, when through his night glasses he had picked up the vague outline of a distant conning tower silhouetted against the dark horizon.

And he had made a perfect approach. With engines stopped to prevent any noise which might alarm the enemy, he had stealthily crept in on his motors to within a mile, submerged to periscope depth to avoid any chance of being seen, and at full speed had moved in to make his attack on his unsuspecting prey, torpedoes ready, his finger on the firing button, his target broadside on, success assured.

C'est la guerre! He bit his lip at the recollection. His radioman, white faced, had stumbled out of the little soundproof booth abaft him with startling news. A destroyer! The high pitched note of her propellers was ringing in his microphones.

And almost before the breathless operator had blurted out his message, Parker, his eye still pressed to the periscope, saw a streak of fire flash through the darkness, a brilliant glare as the tracer shell burst, and in that flash of light the *U-6* brilliantly outlined with men madly scrambling down her conning tower, while she moved slowly ahead and started to settle in a crash dive. Then darkness again.

In anguish, Parker had taken a wild chance, hurriedly pressed the trigger, fired a torpedo at his vanishing prey. He had missed. Range too long, aim bad, poor run on his torpedo? He never knew. The *U-6* had disappeared before he could fire again; in the rush of events that followed, only the *L-18* had occupied his thoughts.

"Hard dive!"

With diving planes at full depression, they had plunged suddenly from periscope depth to eighty feet. And just in time.

A sharp explosion, the *L-18* shook violently, her white faced crew clung to their controls to save themselves. A depth bomb. Was it meant for them or the *U-6*? Who knew? To a destroyer every submarine was an enemy. Shoot first, investigate afterward.

A little sick, Parker had hesitated a moment. Should he come up? A salvo of four-inch shells might come crashing into his hull before he could get the lid open and his Very recognition signals bursting in the air.

Another crash, and then at brief intervals a series of shocks. The *L-18* quivered with each shock. The destroyer was laying a pattern of depth bombs as she whirled in a figure 8 over the spot where the *U-6* had disappeared. Soon she would stop, listen for propellers. And if she picked them up instead of the *U-6*, a shower of depth bombs would come raining down on them. Parker's indecision vanished.

"Stop the motors!"

Without headway to overcome her negative buoyancy, the *L-18* commenced sinking. 100 feet, 200 feet, 250 feet. In agony Parker had watched the gage. Bottom at sixty fathoms according to the chart. 200 feet was their working depth, 300 feet their safe limit. Was the chart accurate? 300 feet, still sinking. Petrified, the men gripped their controls, watched the gage. And then at 305 feet, a gentle bump, the *L-18* came softly to rest in the mud. A sigh of relief echoed audibly through the control room, tense limbs relaxed, his crew breathed once more.

The shocks of the depth bombs were fainter now, ceased shortly. Crouched alongside the operator in the tiny radio booth, receivers jammed over his ears, Parker listened on the microphones to the shrill note of the propellers on the surface, singing in his ears one moment as the destroyer darted ahead, then ceasing abruptly as she stopped her engines to listen. Back and forth, it seemed endlessly, that note rang through the sea as the destroyer searched the depths, then faded gradually as the baffled ship swung in ever widening circles, trying to pick up the trail of her submerged enemy.

But in vain. Somewhere in the depths, nestling quietly in the mud like himself, Parker visioned the *U-6* and shuddered at the thought. The vessel, which a few minutes before he had been ready to blow out of the water, was now like the *L-18* a hunted fugitive, her crew crouching in terror like his own in their cramped compartments, shaking at the fear that something might float up, give their hiding place away, send a hurtling bomb, set to burst at the bottom, down on the hull to crush their fragile shell, bury them forever in the mud and the ooze of the ocean floor.

But it had not happened. The destroyer had vanished, seeking a submarine still underway. After two hours on the bottom, Parker had partly blown his safety tank, floated up to thirty feet, pushed up his periscope, made a careful search to insure that neither friend nor foe was in sight on the surface, then hastily had blown the rest of the safety tank to get his conning tower fully out of water.

With the lid open to get air for the engines, he had hurried full speed through the night to put at least five miles between himself and the scene of the battle, lest the *U-6* should bob up and catch him unawares; then, with propellers disconnected and engines working full power, the *L-18* spent the

rest of the dark hours recharging storage cells, while her thankful crew took turns, four at a time, in clambering up on the little bridge, hardly six feet out of water, and breathing in the free air of heaven.

ONCE more Lieutenant Parker swept the horizon with his periscope, scanned the waves as the dawn broke over the sea. Nothing in sight on the surface—the destroyer had vanished.

At dead slow speed the *L-18* swam through the sea, using only enough of her precious electricity to give her diving planes control and hold the depth against the slight positive buoyancy which Parker was carrying on the boat for safety's sake. Slowly the minutes dragged on, grew to hours. The sun rose high in the heavens, no longer throwing a blinding glare into the periscope eye as it swung round. The submarine wheeled gradually in a huge spiral, the search curve on which he hoped to find his enemy.

Inside the boat the air grew thicker; the odor of oil, of acid fumes from the batteries, permeated the control room, the atmosphere became laden with carbon dioxide from being breathed over and over again. Parker noted that the air of alertness with which his men had taken the boat under was gradually vanishing; heads drooped over the controls, lack-luster eyes gazed vacantly at gages, pored uncomprehendingly over the switchboard. His own head started to ache; his eyes, strained by the high powered lenses in the periscope, burned in their sockets; his head felt heavy, his mind thick.

Six hours under, eight more to go before darkness settled again and they could safely come up. He wondered vaguely what had become of the *U-6*. She must be taking it easier. Unaware of the presence of another submarine, she would spend part of her time, at least, awash with her lid open, taking a fresh supply of air every hour or so, perhaps even running on her Diesels to conserve her batteries, safe in the thought that she could spot a surface ship and dive long before such a small object as her conning tower could be seen by any approaching vessel.

Parker thanked his luck for that unawareness; at least he had not given himself away by coming up and firing recognition signals while the *U-6* was still around; unquestionably the Germans had dived the night before without the slightest knowledge that the sudden rush of that hurtling destroyer was all that had saved them from certain disaster.

Well, it was nearly over. With the night, his patrol finished, the *L-18* would move hastily out of that square, get well clear before the *L-7*, relieving them, came on the patrol in the morning. A grim situation, all right. Once his relief arrived, if he was still there submerged, she would certainly blow him out of the water if she sighted his periscope; if he ran on the surface and disclosed his identity as an Allied man-of-war, then a torpedo from the lurking *U-6* was almost certain to do the same.

A rotten life in the pigs—fair game for everybody, submerged or afloat, with that blasted air to eat your lungs out while under water, and the deafening roar of Diesels to ruin your sleep and drive you crazy while you charged at night; and always in the background of your mind, while running submerged, that gnawing fear of the sea, lying in wait to crush your boat and flatten you out if your pig went out of control for a brief instant and sank just a few feet too deep before you caught her.

Parker shook his head, tried to throw off the weight that seemed to press in on his throbbing temples. He was lucky—his last day on patrol. Tonight when they broke surface, and the engines started to pound again, it would be to drive them home to Queenstown, not to charge batteries for another day of torture in the depths.

And nothing had broken down. He

could face Commander Wilson on the *Melville;* his men, instead of overhauling engines, could spend their time in port on liberty. Cork, even Queenstown, after a week jammed inside this pig would be heaven for a sailor. No breakdowns. Perhaps the jinx was shaken at last. With an effort, the weary skipper pulled his thoughts back from the rest that awaited him in Queenstown, pressed his eye against the lens in front of him.

A vista of gray waves met his sight, undulating gently, capped with patches of white foam here and there, merging in the distant haze with a cloudy sky. Slowly he revolved the periscope tube, scanned the horizon, searched the intervening sea. Nothing in sight—no ships, no smoke, only the vast sweep of the deserted ocean. Perfunctorily he finished his inspection, then pressed the motor button and started to house the periscope.

A glint of sunshine flashed into his eye. Queer. The sun was too high for that. He stopped housing, squinted out the lens. His heart skipped a beat.

There, half a mile off on the starboard bow, its tapering length glistening in the sun, was a periscope!

Parker leaned forward, punched a voice tube button, shouted excitedly:

"Torpedo room! Stand by. U-boat on the starboard bow!"

As if jolted by an electric current, the drooping figures around the control room stiffened suddenly, looked toward their skipper. Forgotten were the bad air, the cramped quarters. Tense fingers gripped the controls again, eager eyes scanned their instruments, ready for action.

The enemy was in sight!

His temples throbbing wildly, Parker pressed his face again to the eyepiece, looked hurriedly at the bearing. Forty degrees on his starboard bow. They must bring her dead ahead.

"Ten degrees right rudder!" His voice sounded strange, far off, as, eye glued to the periscope, his words echoed through the stale air.

"Ten right, sir," repeated the helmsman just forward of him.

The *L-18* started to swing. Parker dared not even for an instant take his gaze off that thin steel finger dancing in the far off waves; if he lost it in the whitecaps, he might never pick up that gleam again. Slowly he walked his periscope round as the submarine answered her rudder, and the bearing of his target drew ahead. The *L-18* heeled gently in her turn and Parker clung tightly to the handles to maintain his balance. Only ten degrees on the bow now.

"Meet her!"

Hurriedly Lieutenant Parker tried to estimate the course of that periscope. Was the *U-6* bows-on to him, or was she broadside? Only in the latter case would a slim submarine offer target enough for a decent shot. Tensely he watched the wisps of spray play round the distant tube, caught a tiny wake on its far side, switched in the high magnification lens to study it. The field of view in his periscope narrowed, the distant waves seemed suddenly to leap closer; he was startled to see that the eye of the enemy periscope was pointing directly at him, that the two submarines were at that moment headed directly for each other!

For an instant his blood froze, his jaw dropped, he stared open mouthed, hypnotized by that tiny lens gleaming at him across only half a mile of tossing seas.

"Steady on th' course now." The quartermaster's voice broke the silence of the control room.

With a jerk Parker came back to life. No more maneuvering; he must get his torpedo in first!

He fumbled for the firing pistol, stared out the lens. The enemy periscope was dead ahead, his boat had steadied. His fingers gripped the firing handle, started to squeeze the trigger. A vague recollection; he paused. The torpedo room had not reported ready.

FOR the first time since sighting the enemy, Parker tore his eye from the rubber shield, stooped hastily, and looked forward through the open watertight doors into the torpedo room, where outboard of the shining bronze covers to the tubes, he glimpsed the broad back of his chief torpedoman straining frenziedly over a wheel.

Parker straightened up, punched a button, sang out into the voice tube—

"Torpedo room there! What's wrong?"

The reply fell like a bludgeon on his ear.

"The bow cap's jammed, Cap'n! We can't rotate it to uncover any o' the torpedo tubes outside."

Parker's heart sank like lead. The bow cap, the spherical outside fair-water over his nest of torpedoes, with a solitary opening which had to register with the mouth of the tube to be fired before the missile could be ejected! Jammed! And with none of his four tubes in line with the opening.

Parker stooped, stared forward into the torpedo room where his men were struggling with the rotating gear. A brawny seaman seized a spoke, added his weight to the chief's on the wheel.

Broken down again! In a daze the stunned skipper watched the straining torpedo men while the full meaning of the accident sank into his brain. The glistening bodies of his torpedoes, the grim warheads full of TNT that a moment before, so he thought, had needed but the pressure of his finger to spring from his tubes toward the *U-6*—imprisoned now behind that fatal cup, impossible of release. The *L-18* had suddenly become impotent, unable to attack, helpless even to defend herself. What had sprung the shafting, jammed the operating gears? Rotten construction? Those depth bombs last night? No difference now.

As he watched, a third seaman sprang forward with a huge monkey wrench, slipped its jaws over the rim of the wheel for a lever, flung his body hard down on the handle. No use. The wheel refused to turn, the bow cap was frozen tight with all the tubes sealed off.

Stunned by the situation, Parker turned to find terrified faces staring at him from all sides; the after end of the room was filled with engineers. Like a flash the news of their disaster had spread through the boat. Unconsciously the men were starting to edge toward the escape hatch beneath the conning tower.

Escape! A cracked laugh died in his throat. Why worry over the hatches? The *U-6* was close aboard. Another few seconds and the quickest way out would be through their smashed side.

"Hard dive!"

The order burst from his parched lips, echoed like a bomb through the room. Diving wheels spun madly, controllers went over to full speed ahead. The *L-18* started to seek safety in the depths. Ignoring his crew, Parker flung himself at the periscope, got a fleeting glimpse of that deadly eye staring at him not two hundred yards away, saw a fine cloud of spray spout through the surface, a streak of bubbles form in the waves, race for him. Then the sea washed over his periscope, suddenly blotted out everything.

"They've fired!" groaned Parker. He twisted his head from the useless lens, looked feverishly over his shoulder at the depth gage. Still 40 feet, the needle hardly starting to move. Would they never get down? Blanched faces, wild eyes all around followed his glance; trembling lips muttered curses watching that dial.

In a few seconds now the torpedo would strike. Parker looked despairingly toward his torpedo room, at the men still struggling there. "One more breakdown and back you go to—" Commander Wilson's threat flashed through his mind. "Annapolis." One more breakdown. How deep was the ooze on the ocean bottom? "Or Guam till this war's over." Wilson was wrong. A shattered submarine buried in the mud. 45 feet

on that gage now. No hope. How many seconds since the *U-6* had fired? Only ten seconds needed by a torpedo to cover that distance. His gaze wandered over the side of the submarine, covered everywhere with intricate machinery. Where would their hull suddenly burst open, let the ocean come pouring through?

A DEAFENING crash! The *L-18* heeled drunkenly to port; the bow shot up at a sharp angle. The end. Curses, prayers, a tangle of arms and legs, a knot of crazed seamen struggling for the ladder to the conning tower—then a sudden silence as the fighting men stopped, looked wonderingly around for the rushing water that should be flooding the boat.

Parker, in a daze, extricated himself from the kingston levers in the port bilges, groped his way uncertainly back to his station. The water. Where was it? Which compartment had that torpedo torn apart?

Incredulously he shot a glance through the forward bulkhead, then aft through the quivering hull. The deck was badly heeled; mattresses, men, tools, charts, were sprawled out everywhere; but there was no cataract of water rushing toward him—yet.

What had happened? That explosion, the shock that had tossed them through the seas like a bubble? The torpedo had hit somewhere. In a damaged boat Parker dared not stay submerged.

"Blow all ballasts! Hard rise!"

His sharp command rang through the control room. Bewildered men, startled to find themselves still alive, untangled themselves from the manifolds, scrambled out of the bilges, staggered back to their controls. The shrill whistle of compressed air, the grinding of gears, the whir of motors echoed through the boat as the men of the *L-18* fought to check their descent, to rise to the surface, escape from their prison. Ballast water poured overboard, propellers drove viciously ahead, diving planes at full elevation shot the trembling shell upward.

An instant, then their conning tower burst clear, and the submarine rocked unsteadily in the seaway. Parker scrambled up the ladder into the conning tower, tripped the lever; the hatch flew back, he crawled through. Water was still pouring off the chariot bridge, his low deck was just breaking from the sea. Swiftly his eye ran along the hull from the jagged net cutter in the bow to the tapering stern; unbelievingly his glance swept back. No damage anywhere.

And yet, that explosion? The torpedo had certainly struck something. What?

Half a ship length ahead, a spreading patch of oil caught his eye. He stared thunderstruck. That was where the *U-6* had been!

Something rubbed his legs. He looked down. McCarthy was squeezing through the hatch; below him Parker caught a glimpse of the conning tower jammed with men, struggling to get out. In a trice, his chief machinist's mate was alongside him, seamen were pouring out the hatch, crowding the chariot bridge, clambering down the outside of the conning tower to the half awash deck below.

A huge bubble of air rose through the sea into the middle of the slick, frothed a moment, then subsided as the oily ring widened out, a patch of water, strangely smooth in an ocean of tossing waves and spray tipped crests. Anxiously Parker scanned the sea. No periscope anywhere. But there in the bubbles and the froth, a few bits of oil soaked wreckage were breaking surface, shattered fragments of a submarine's deck!

"Look, Skipper, this pile o' junk rates a chevron on 'er conning tower from now on. We're heroes! The *L-18*'s sunk a U-boat!" McCarthy pointed excitedly at the bits of wood and huge globules

of oil gushing upward near their bow.

Lieutenant Parker nodded slowly.

"Guess you're right, Mac, she's gone. But what under the sun's happened? I saw that torpedo start for us."

"The gyro in the tail o' that torpedo must'a' stuck holdin' its rudder hard over, an' made it run in a circle so it curved round an' soaked the *U-6* instead o' us. I seen that happen onct in target practise, but never with a war shot." He mopped the beads of sweat off his forehead. "I guess Heinie's pigboats ain't no more reliable than Uncle Sam's."

Parker looked forward to his bow, in full surface trim now, vaguely made out just below the waterline the outlines of the jammed torpedo tube cap.

He shook his head, gripped the engine telegraph, turned a grimly smiling face toward McCarthy.

"Well, Mac, we're almost helpless. Let's get under way for home while we're still live heroes!"

Ulysses' Last Speech

By HARRY KEMP

"As careless lovers go to their delight
With lifted heart, Elysian-taken breath,
We dared the kiss and fierce embrace of death,
Innumerable day, unnumbered night!
There was no stratagem we failed to shape;
What breaks men's hearts we tossed up for a game;
The sick excuse withholding caution makes
We scorned to serve—and won immortal fame!
We struck defection down with jests for rods.
The chance that serves the coward for escape,
Or that unsettled resolution takes
When the red wave of roaring onslaught breaks,
We brushed aside with laughter like the gods!

"And half the battle was the thing we planned,
Half, shafts we aimed in thought before the blow;
And often, when we moved against the foe,
They, had they guessed how we were undermanned,
Had swept us from the field into the sea—
So great, so slight a thing, is victory!

"As with the meed we fought for, we depart;
Though justly wearers of the laureled fame,
There now needs other courage for the heart
For which old battles can not find the name!"

* * *

When victory crowned them in their tenth, worst year
And what they lost their last persistence won,
Some thought their last, heroic deed was done:
Until Ulysses, leaning on his spear,
Launched this last speech at Agamemnon's host,
And stirred in them again the immortal ghost!

By F. R. BUCKLEY

OF EDUCATION

A Story of Medieval Italy

To his Excellency the Lord Count Ippolito di Policastro, at his house in the Piazza di Francia at Milan, deliver these. From his Lordship's humble servant to command, L. Caradosso:

MY LORD:

At sight of your hand of write, I said to my maidservant that the devil was in it; being that only that morning (yesterday) my thoughts had been turning with respectful gratitude in the direction of your Excellency. Now that I have read the letter (excepting the Latin quotations and the Greek joke) I am surer than ever, for reasons which will presently appear.

Methinks that in your Grace's preoccupation with defunct languages, your Highness has confused me with some other person; I being, on the contrary from a schoolmaster, the soldier whom your Excellency saved from hanging twenty-seven years and one day ago this Feast of St. John the Baptist. So that of a generality, I should needs confess my unfitness to advise your Grace which university would best prepare your

Highness' son for his career; whereas, thanks to an anniversary falling today (how many anniversaries we have, at seventy-five!) I am enabled to assist your Lordship. On this day twenty-five years agone, I entered the service of Luca Bendello; perhaps known to your Worship as sometime Tyrant of Bugasto.

Luca was not, as your Lordship's son has the pleasure to be, of the high nobility; moreover, being twenty-six, he was past the age of universities; yet in one respect his case was similar to that of your Highness' offspring. *Videliceti* your Grace wishes the young count to regain the lost properties of the family, and to this end would educate him; while Luca desired to extend his tyranny into a county, and to this end had hired me from the Duke of Costecaldo, to be captain of the guard. This meant, in those days, likewise the captaincy of the army; a pleasant appointment for which I presented myself, nevertheless, five days later than the stated time.

Luca remarked on this.

He was a dark, slim young man on whose youth (I was nearing fifty at the time) I looked at first with some indulgence and amusement. Strolling into his cabinet that afternoon, I envisaged myself answering his questions as to my lateness at some length; telling how I had had to fight a duel before leaving Costecaldo; how the duke, annoyed at my killing of his new captain, had imprisoned me; and how I had walked out of the castle in the uniform of a jailer—no great exploit, considering that the turnkey knew no better than to let me stun him with his own keys, but enough, methought, to make my young master's eyes bulge.

However, he had remarkable eyes. I can see them now. Nay, thinking back to that first interview, I can even feel them; gimlets.

"Five days late," says the young man. "Why?"

I had no thought, now, of gallant recitals. Nay. Of a sudden I was fain to invent a horse, give him glanders and hope for a measure of mercy.

"You should have got another horse forthwith."

"Under favor," says I, wondering whether perchance I had not glanders myself, so weak did my knees feel. "Money was lacking."

"You should have got a horse nevertheless," says my master, pushing away some papers and standing up. "Look you, Caradosso. My business is not like that of your fool of a duke. Five days to him—fifteen days—may be nothing; he hath no plans, having nothing to make them withal. But I have plans—plans—plans— Understandest thou?"

To show their complexity, he interlaced his fingers. Aye, and wriggled them; even at which—as I shall show—he understated the case.

"And to me five hours—five minutes—may be vital. Dost thou understand? Answer!"

"Y-yes," says I with difficulty. He was still staring me in the eye. "Yes, your Grace."

"Luckily for thee," he went on (and I believed him, young as he was!); "I say, luckily for thee, there is another fool in this business, who is likewise late. Take all the army but twenty men for a castle guard, and go capture the Castello di Monterosso at Rastelli."

"The—?" says I, much as though some one had just struck me in the stomach.

"The Castello di Monterosso, at Rastelli," says the young gentleman, in the manner of one teaching a child. "The fortress. Take the troops and capture it. Start tonight."

"To—?" I began again.

"Yes, tonight!" roars the Ser Luca, flying from mockery into a violent rage. "God's body and bones, aye, yes, tonight! Fool, laggard, dolt, idiot! Is it not enough to have wasted five days that might have cost me a county, but you must waste time parroting me, drooling forth every word I say—"

So he went on, causing me to tremble as I have not trembled in my life besides; and this, mark you (I should say, may your

Highness be graciously pleased to note) with a fear quite other than physical. Physically, indeed, my new master was little better than a weakling. His body was eminently shaved and scented, not to mention that it was exquisitely clothed; but there was no strength in it; as witness that, yielding to his impulse to hurl a chair at me, his Lordship failed to lift the said article of furniture, and indeed fell back into it half fainting.

"Begone!" he snarled as I moved forward to assist him. "And by morning be twenty miles on the way!"

The which I was.

THE FACT may surprise your Excellency, who before immersing himself in literature had some experience of armies, and may remember their habitual slowness of motion—especially under a new commander as yet unfeared. Ah, but they feared the Ser Luca. *Dio mio*, how they feared him, from the oldest sergeant down to the newest recruit—and the more so for that they knew not why. Having made the oldest sergeant my lieutenant, I asked him how this might be; at which he spread his hands and made his eyebrows disappear under his helmet.

"God knoweth," says he; and considered.

"Is he much of a hanging man?" I asked. "Rope struck, so to speak?"

The sergeant, who had been considering me no less than what he had to say, now smiled and became comparatively voluble—in a whisper.

"Nay, as for that," says he, "'a's no worse than the next. Better than some I've served. And he is better served than they were. That is a pun, if the Captain pleases."

"Excellent," says I. "But what I asked—and what you will now answer without further prevarication—is the reason for this strange zeal? Fear—aye. But fear of what?"

The old man pulled his horse closer to the side of mine, glanced mistrustfully over his shoulder and continued.

"Captain," says he, "this is the matter, leaving out all question of his Lordship's being in league with the devil, which no sensible man may believe, despite—despite—"

"Despite what?" I demanded impatiently. "The evidence in favor of it, thou wouldst say? What is this evidence, then?"

The old war dog actually grew pale.

"Nay, I said no such thing," he protested. "I—I—"

"Come," says I, eyeing him. "Enough of this. I'm no spy for his Lordship. I was ten years lieutenant to Matteo Scarlatti, I'd have thee know."

"I knew the Captain had been with the freelances," says my lieutenant, wiping his brow (aye, he had burst into a sweat!). "Otherwise I should not have spoken as freely as I have."

"How did you know that?"

"Under favor, your Honor's use of the term rope struck."

Aye, that was right. This fellow, I realized, must have been in the Montemurlo campaign—which made it the more extraordinary that he should fear anything, man or devil.

"Well?" I inquired, smiling at him.

He smiled in return. The Montemurlo campaign was indeed amusing—to look back upon.

"Well," he said, in such manner that I knew we were to get to the truth at last, "it is his Lordship is so cursed unexpected. Captain, to try conclusions with him is to be a fly acting in contempt of a spider, if I make myself clear."

"You do not," I told him.

"It is hard to explain," says the sergeant. "It would be easier if your Honor had known Bugasto in the old count's time."

"Why so?"

"There was a hanging man for you," says the sergeant indirectly. "A roarer, he was. Drunk half the time, and I've seen him kill a man with a box on the ears. Never a feast day in the town but what the watch fought a pitched battle in the streets, and his Honor—"

"Well, well, for God's sake?"

"It is a pity that your Honor hath no experience of Bugasto since its present lordship—"

"What of it? Hath the very town changed?"

"Aye, indeed," says the old sergeant, again glancing over his shoulder. "O Captain, there is no more roaring. Nay, nay. Nothing so wholesome. The Ser Luca is a clever man, Captain, and acts accordingly."

"Which being translated, meaneth—?"

"There was a man," says the sergeant—in such a brooding tone that he might just as well have said 'I'—"who, being on watch and athirst, did chance to slip behind a buttress and take a small drink from a bottle. No more than a quart. None saw him. None spoke to him."

"He was lucky," says I. "Now under my command—"

The sergeant laid a hand on my knee.

"*But*," says he, "there was that night an alarm that a bottle of very choice wine had gone a-missing from his Lordship's private table—the one he hath in his room. Since none had access to the room save the guard, it was announced moreover that no wine would be served in the guardroom for one month. Now certain of the guard knew that the man of whom I speak had had a bottle under his jerkin—an honest bottle, Captain, so help me God, lifted from the servants' bin; but what use was that? Not a son of a dog but would have it that that was the stolen bottle, and what a life that man led for a month passeth the imagination. Ten days arrest would have been child's play to it. I would have done twenty rather."

I stared at him.

"You tell me soberly that his lordship—?"

He nodded, and with his right arm made divers weaving motions. For all his blockishness in the joints, it was evident that he would pantomime a snake.

"*So*," says he, wiping his forehead for the fifth or sixth time. "In the grass, Captain. Never visible. Yet ever present. Moving by—"

He recommenced the weaving motions, expressing long series of interlacing curves.

"Your Honor understands? To bite a man in the heel just when he believes himself safe! Phew!"

I meditated a moment.

"And yet," says I, "he hath his moments of honest violence, too. For instance, here we go merrily forth to besiege a castle."

"Which hath ere this been besieged by ten times our numbers, and without success," says the sergeant—I should call him lieutenant, but he was so utterly the sergeant that my pen slips. A man of sixty he was, with almost as many sword cuts on his face as there were wrinkles.

"Oh?" says I.

"Ah!" says my lieutenant; and dropped back to his proper position—three paces to the rear of any further conversation.

I doubt whether to the moment of his death he was quite sure that, Montemurlo and Matteo Scarlatti to the contrary notwithstanding, I was not an agent assigned to subject him, by some roundabout route, to the vengeance of Ser Luca Bendello.

HIS DEATH occurred three days thence, during our first assault on the castle of Monterosso; of which assault (speaking, with your Grace's permission, as one old soldier to another) I will here give some details.

First I must in some sort describe the situation of the castle; it stood upon a rock whereof three sides were precipitous and the fourth all battlements; and that nothing might be lacking to the joy of the besieger, the rock arose (alack that the kind Lord should permit such freaks!) out of a most soft and pestiferous swamp, full of snakes and all manner of winged things that stung. There was, of course, a road which approached the castle on the side which was not a precipice; but to appear on this—the only piece of solid land within a mile—was to invite cannon balls from four vast engines over the main gate.

One of these foul things dropped between the lieutenant and myself as we reconnoitered, the evening of our arrival; showering us with mud and sending us back post haste to where the troop waited in the bog.

"Moreover, we shall have to camp here," says the old sergeant, smacking a fly that was draining the life blood from his nose. "That road—"

"I know, I know," I told him, watching the ball from a second engine go bouncing along it. "Well, I've camped in worse places."

The old man looked at me with a disbelief which was quite warranted, but which he did not otherwise express.

"Wherefore, pitch tents, my lads," says I briskly. "Get a good night's sleep, and tomorrow we'll crack this little place and be off home. Lieutenant, I would confer with thee."

So that I should not seem to hear the men's remarks as they dismounted and—ankle deep in black mud—started to cut branches to make themselves as it were, islands, I began this conference at once; it continued, in my tent, until after midnight, growing steadily less hopeful with each passing hour. My sergeant agreed with me that, not being flies, we could by no means storm the precipices; and that until we had developed physiques which would stand forty-pound iron balls, attack by the road was likewise impossible. He furthermore concurred in my estimate that we needed a thousand more men, twenty or thirty guns, and six months time for the exploit; having done all which, however, he was firm in his opinion that we had better go forward with the siege of the castle, or Ser Luca would know why.

"I'll tell him why, then!" says I hotly (I was by this time so fly stung that my eyes were nigh shut). "'A's made a mistake, not knowing the strength of this place—"

"Certes he knoweth the strength of the place," says old Lucio. "Did he not hold it once himself?"

"Did he?"

"Aye—and gave it up to this fellow that hath it, for a pleasure estate at Fiesole."

"Pleasure estate? Fiesole?" I demanded. "What the devil did he want with a pleasure estate at Fiesole, with this hornet's nest right at his doors?"

"God knows," said the lieutenant drearily. "He had a use for it. Now he hath a use for this again. And what I have the honor to tell the Captain is that we had better busy ourselves with getting it for him."

"It is throwing our lives away to try it."

"It is the same to return with the place unwon," says Lucio. "Two things the Ser Luca not only hangs for, but also tortures—murder and disobedience. Though I have known him to pardon murder."

He arose and asked my permission to retire. At the door of the tent he turned back.

"Your Honor will imagine that we are also under surveillance," he said.

"Surveillance?"

"Aye. A lord that would know when a sentry took a mouthful of wine would certes be 'ware if a captain deserted—or even thought of so doing. With respect."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Begging your pardon," says Lucio; and retired.

I think he must have been gifted, then, with that second sight which come to men on the eve of their death. Not only had he read what was in my mind (at this distance of time, and in view of the circumstances, I take no shame in confessing that I had indeed contemplated flight) but as I have shown, he had also in some sort predicted the arrival of the morrow's messenger from my lord. This official—accompanied by an escort which was ample to capture any fugitive captain, and which, judging by the freshness of the horses, had spent the night in our vicinity—presented a letter wherein Ser Luca demanded instant news of our progress toward the taking of Monterosso.

"You may tell his Lordship," I began, choking, "that being but barely arrived,

and at a fortress which—"

Lucio reached forward and pulled me by the sleeve.

"If the captain pleases," he said; and drew me away.

"Look you," says he, eyeing me strangely, and omitting all titles of respect, "there's no use in such talk as that. If Luca demands news, news he must have, and instantly as he saith. Nay, hearken. As lieutenant, I command half this army, eh? Very well, then. Let me command it."

"If we are to be suicides to order," says I through my teeth, "the captain will lead."

But he put his hand persuasively on my shoulder.

"Not so," says he, "and for two reasons. First, I have lived long enough, whereas it is visible in thine eyes that thou hast not. Secondly, the men know me and will follow—which they would not do for thee. I purpose an assault on the main gate."

"Madness!" I cried.

He smiled.

"The losses will be heavy," he admitted, "but if my lord demands news, news he must have. Moreover, I intend to take two bags of powder which, God willing, we may place against the gates before we are all killed. The gates blown in, an assault by the rest of the army would have some chance of success."

"Five hundred men against the contents of that castle? Much chance, truly!"

He smiled again and shrugged his shoulders; also, he carried his point, and promptly delivered the assault he had proposed.

Ah, your Grace, I have seen many advances under fire, both preceding that and since; but naught have I seen resembling that attack and I hope I never shall. Ser Luca's agent—I am glad to record it for humanity's sake—fell to the earth in a swound before the end; as for me [and the men of my half of the army, we sat our horses staring as if we had been turned to stone.

THEY started at a gallop, emerging suddenly in battle order from behind the low growing trees that fringed the swamp; but quick as they were, the guns were quicker. Not that they spoke at once, or even hastily. Nay. In time of peace, those hell instructed gunners had devised a trick which later became general—they had ranged their guns on a feature of the landscape, and marked the proper lay on the gun carriages; so that in time of war, far from fiddling gunner-like with their blocks and screws, and so giving their poor devils of enemies a chance such as merciful men would have given even to dogs, all the swine had to do was stand by with their linstocks until the charge reached a given point. The point in this case was five hundred paces from the castle; it was marked by a sort of shrine on a pole; as my wretched troops passed the which, bang went all four of those accursed guns together; and smash went their four balls into the head of the column.

It was the worse in that the horses had had time to gather full speed; their impetus joined itself, so speaking, to the force of the balls; and such was the shock of the meeting that the animals struck fairly flew heels over head into the air.

This was when Ser Luca's agent fainted; and I am not ashamed to say that for a moment I closed my eyes. I had come to manhood in a time which even then was called barbarous, and I had had little dealing with gunpowder. For the moment, these novelties of an advancing civilization gave me envy to vomit.

But when I saw again, there before me was the antidote for this feeling; for, leaving behind the bloody huddle which remained of four files, the charge was continuing! Aye, I have found it so; man's cruelty to his brother, which maketh the onlooker ashamed of his two legs, at the same time bringeth out such fortitude in the victim as to make the beholder proud to be human. I have known those who used this as an argument for more cruelty—bigger guns, and spears with

more barbs on them; at thought of whom I find myself wishing I were a toad—or perhaps, in view of my rheumatism, better a squirrel.

My Lord, you see how even the thought of that day affecteth me—it is an evil memory that will cause me to philosophize. For the guns fired again, as the troops passed a clump of low growing bushes—just two of them this time, leaving two more to do their murdering as the column reached the foot of the castle slope. I know not who had designed this system; but I trust he shall kiss hot iron in hell. That first volley, showing the men what a shamble must ensue when those guns boomed; then, after time enough to load, a second smashing, which would lead the poor devils to expect as long an interval before the next; and then, just as they fancied themselves nearing safety, the third fire at the range of a stone's throw.

I was horrified even past giving attention to my lord's messenger, who chanced to be lying with his face in a puddle; but there on the castle hillside, those men who had seen their comrades blown to rags beside them, and knew not at what instant they should share that fate themselves, were dismounting from their horses and preparing to finish the advance on foot.

Two of the men carried the powder bags that were to blow in the great gate; running ahead of them, the bent form of the old lieutenant turned and waved an arm at me.

At that moment the arquebusiers on the walls opened fire; dozens of them; and the men who had survived the wholesale slaughter of the cannon began to drop singly under the storm of bullets. The foremost powder carrier staggered, dropped his load and lay writhing; another man who came to take his burden spun about with his hand to his head and fell motionless. Whereat those following hung back, until old Lucio returned, seized the fallen burden, and with it on his back ran crouching forward. Then the advance recommenced.

They were within yards of the gate—the fire of the small arms redoubled—and there came suddenly the boom of a cannon; whose load—they had not been able to depress it enough—killed none but those of our attackers who had hung back. The second powder carrier, protected by some miracle or other, struggled up to Lucio's side.

They were bending to place their loads close against the gate—where alone, in view of the lack of resistance on the outer side, the explosion could do any good—when of a sudden I saw appear on the parapet above them a man unarmed, but more dangerous than any of the fellows at the wall guns. He had a torch in his hand; he had his arm back to fling it. I heard my voice, rising above the groans of the troops behind me, calling senseless warning; and then came a great red flash and a heavy, laggard roar. That was the end of old Lucio, God rest his soul; and of half my army save four men with singed doublets.

It would have been the end of the siege, too, but for that agent of Luca's, who, having recovered his senses and washed his face, encountered me (with his escort) every time I rode out of sight of the camp. Alone I could not leave; I could not take the troops with me (to become *condottieri*, a plan whereof I had thought) without opening the matter to them; and I could not do this, without the agent's knowing of it.

Just what Ser Luca would be able to do against me, who would be in possession of all his troops, I could not imagine; but, remembering those eyes of his, whereof the blacks seemed miles behind the pupils and the space between filled with black ice, methought it would be something I dared not risk. Wherein, as shall be shown, I was quite right.

SO A WEEK passed, without further assault on the castle, and without any casualties on our side save such as might be caused by firing at occasional sentries with the wall guns. And then, between one

day and the next—there had been a rain which made our swamp more noisome than ever—the black ague broke out in the camp. By afternoon of the day when the first man came staggering up and complained that his blood was half ice and the other half hell fire, fifty men were shivering and talking nonsense as they huddled over fires. And my lord's agent knew of it. He came into camp with his nose covered, smelling of vinegar and asafetida like an apothecary's shop, and propounded orders. It was his opinion that Ser Luca would be displeased.

"The whole arby will fall sick," says he through the handkerchief, "ad thed whad shall becub of the siege?"

"God knows—or the devil," says I. "What am I to do?"

"Act, man!" says he, waving his arms in the air. "Act! Attack; as I've told thee every day this week."

"Ever since thou got back thy stomach from the last charge," I put in; but he ignored me.

"The men are not mortal ill as yet," he went on. "Look you, even those that are worst can get ahorse. By tomorrow they will be worse, and there will be new victims as sick as these are today. Unless thou deliver an attack today, I tell thee, my lord will have thine ears!"

"Then—" I began wrathfully, being about to say that in such case I would e'en borrow the agent's, wherewith to replace my own; but he was so small and white, and suddenly so trembling, that I could not cut him.

"I shall see his Worship today," stammers the wretch. "Moreover—"

"Then tell him," says I, "that Luigi Caradosso refused to lead men already sick to their deaths. Tell him that—"

"He will—"

"And tell him also that I kicked thee," says I. "And tell him where. Begone!"

I realized, nevertheless, that there had been reason in what he said. I was in the power of a lord who had commanded that I take this castle; who had known, commanding it, that the feat was impossible with the forces at my command; and who would accept excuses only at the lower end of a rope.

I think it was the thought of the rope, so strongly present in my mind during all that weary day—while the agent was riding, doubtless, to call down Luca's wrath on my head—which led me to the mad idea conceived as the dusk fell.

It was a moonless night; without exposing my plan instanter (lest your Grace should think me mad and throw away this letter) I will say that, waiting until the darkness was complete, I set out for the castle alone; armed with my sword and a rope longer than those of which I had been thinking.

On one end of this cord was a grapnel, made out of three hooks such as we used for hanging cattle after slaughter; while attaching the which, and wrapping them carefully with cloth from an old uniform, I had speech with my new second in command—a bright young sergeant from the second troop, whose confirmation in office was to depend on his exact carrying out of my orders. These were, that the men should be allowed to sleep an hour longer, and that they should then be roused and made to stand to arms; on no account moving, however, until the appearance of certain signs and portents which I particularly described to my lieutenant.

"But—" says he.

"What, already?" I demanded; and, leaving him dumbstruck, made the best of the way to the north wall of the castle. Here I was farther from camp than I had ever been on my lone rides, but none of the agent's escort followed me. No, no. Sitting in the mud under a bush, waiting for the wall sentry to pass twice so that I might gage the length of time between his rounds, I quite thrilled with the joys of solitude; indeed resolving, if ever I got out of this business with a whole skin and my neckbones still on kissing terms with one another, I would please both heaven and myself by entering a monastery. Sometimes I still regret the breaking of that vow.

Evidently our inaction—or perhaps our

action of the week before—had given the defenders but a poor opinion of me and my little army. The sentry passed but once in three hundred pulse beats; which is to say, four minutes as near as makes no matter; and he was humming a song whose sound gave me some idea of his elevation above where I stood.

He had scarce passed from hearing before I was afoot and at my business—which, as your Lordship may have guessed, was nothing less than the flinging of my grapnel so that its hooks should catch on some projection capable of sustaining my weight. What your Grace will never guess, though, is the number of tries necessary to accomplish this end.

Let it be remembered that battlements do not abound with hook holds; that the night was pitch dark; and that I had no other guide to my target than the remembered sound of that song; and then let it be believed, if possible, that I succeeded on the very first cast. Aye, by the plague that slew Pilate, at my prentice fling, angels took those butcher hooks and wedged them behind the trunk of a vine that grew out between stones of the sentry walk; wedged them so tightly, moreover, that after I had climbed the rope, all my strength would not suffice to get them loose. Since the sentry would be back at any moment, there was naught to do but cut the rope with my sword. I intended to reclaim the hooks next day, if all went well; but I was prevented, and I suppose they are still where I left them. Possibly—for it was in a sheltered place—with shreds of that old uniform about them yet; a red uniform it was, that I had made by the tailor named Strappi, in the Via Nuova at Florence. It was a vile fit, but on the other hand Strappi had a wife that suited me exactly. Alas, so long ago!

But I return to the business in hand, stating here that whatever else he ignores, your Lordship's son should by all means, or any means, acquire a working knowledge of fortification. By which working knowledge, I do not mean a head full of this modern rubbish about angles of fire and interdependence of bastions; but a practical education—gained by prowling about the servants' quarters—in the probable whereabouts of staircases and doors; particularly back doors.

What would have become of me that night, for instance, had not long experience taught me that rear ramparts, such as this on which I stood, are usually used for drying laundry clouts? And that the stairway leading downward from them goeth of habit to the maids' quarters? I will tell your Grace; I should have taken that first stairway and walked incontinent into one of the men-at-arms always to be found on such stairs. And since most like he would have had his shoes off—

I REMOVED my own; flung them over the wall—good shoon they were, but this was no time for economy; and took the second stair on the east rampart, in the opinion that it would lead me to the main court. Which it did; and, as I had expected, the courtyard was deserted. The time of guard change was still an hour away; everybody but the next guard was asleep; and the guardsmen of the coming watch—their guardroom was across the court, just where I had known it would be—were polishing their arms and drinking wine.

The living quarters of the lord of the place were above the guardroom, on the west side; the banqueting hall and the armory, as I knew from observation on my way from the ramparts, were above me where I stood in the east; so that the powder magazine—which, to come to the point, was with what I had affair—must be higher in the north wing, where it could only blow up servants; or in the south, where it would be handy for the guns. And since there, in case of accidents, it would be considered only to blow up soldiers, whose business it is to be blown up, and who, besides, come cheaper than ladies' maids, I decided to direct my way southward; wherein, as ever, I was right.

I will not further remark on my sa-

gacity; partly because the praise of any wisdom but his own fatigues the reader; and partly because my hand is getting cramped, with the moral of this tale not yet in sight. I would even omit detail of what followed my finding of the magazine —a great stone vault on the floor below the gun platforms—but for my desire to do justice to an excellent soldier deceased. It is true that, being left inside the magazine as sentinel, he should not have admitted me without an order from the captain; even though I did whisper in a disguised voice that I was Pietro, and that I had a bottle of wine. But, having admitted me and felt me clutch his throat instead of wetting it, he fought in a manner that did credit to his upbringing, whatever that was.

We were, of course, in the dark, torches and powder barrels not mingling well together; he had (as I learned from falling subsequently on his pallet, still warm) awakened at my knock from sound sleep; yet he grappled me with the energy of one wide awake, and drove his thumb into my eye as accurately as though it had been noontime. A stalwart fellow, aware, even in that moment of confusion, that I dared not loose his throat; and swift to take advantage of the knowledge. Finding that I had bent my head and sunk my eyes out of danger between my arms, he brought up his knee with an effect which must be experienced to be believed and, finding I still held on, back heeled me so that we fell on the floor.

Now a stupid man would have tried the knee again, thus wasting time; for a human being can only know so much agony at one time, and his first kick had given me that maximum. I did not, indeed, feel the fall on the hard flagstones; nor was I conscious of the blows which (judging by the fact that three of my ribs were broken) he must have driven to my sides. I dimly remember his taking me by the ears and banging my head on the pavement; but at the time it seemed to me of no importance.

Two things alone constituted my world —my own pain, and his throat. Of which the latter ceased to interest me long before the former. Though it seemed an age before he lay still, and left me free to fumble about that black cavern for fuses. A brave man; who went to his God astride a thunderbolt.

For I blew up the magazine, and his body with it. There were no fuses—at least, I could find none; the best I could do was to fill my hat with powder, make a hole in its crown with my sword, and dribble a long trail of the stuff down the corridor. While I did this, the gunners above laughed and joked; one of them even proposed to go below and tell Lotario (my dead man, alas!) some quip; and I felt neither fear at the proposal, nor relief when he yawned and said he was too lazy. So much for that trick with the knee—and even now I can tell when a storm is coming, three days in advance.

But I was still enough in love with life (folk generally are who actively wish they were dead) to wish my powder train to be as long as possible; though I was resolved to fire it at once if I were interrupted. Which I was—not by human intervention; by the stairs up which I had come, but up which fire would certainly not travel. The train must be lighted at the edge of the top step; and never has a distance seemed as short to mine eye as the twenty paces that lay between it and the door of the magazine.

There was no alternative; I drew forth flint and steel; dropped sparks into the uttermost powder grains; abandoned my hat (which blew up with a hissing sound as I turned the first angle of the stair) and fled for my life into the courtyard. My idea, as I need scarcely tell your Lordship, was to get as far as possible from the event which was about to take place; that is to say, I was going to the north wing, there to lie down on the floor of the first room I came to, be it inhabited by manservant, maidservant, or the devil. And I should have had time to reach it, too; had not my progress been interrupted suddenly by a thick hand rammed against my shoulder. Blind with haste and the pain which I have hereinbefore hinted, I

had run head first into a cloaked man with a dark lantern.

"What's this? Drunk—" demanded the officer of the watch; for that it was no less a person I saw by his uniform as he opened the lantern's slide. At the same instant, he saw that I was none of his men; dropped the lantern and, roaring "Treachery!" like the bull of Bashan, was at me with a poniard.

IS NOT life strange? At that time I was notable for a fondness for brawls—and unable, since my name had become known, to induce any one to fight me. Now, when for the first time in my life I desired peace, I must meet a man not only willing for combat, but insistent thereon. When I took his dagger in the shoulder and would have passed him nevertheless, he would have none of such doings; he must close with me and prepare to strike again. So that of instinct I flung him off and, as the guard came running with torches, drew my sword. I had put but a bare three inches of it into his belly when the traveling spark of my powder train reached the magazine; or so I judge. I have no memory of the explosion—which, according to my lieutenant, blew down the whole south wall of the castle and sent a fountain of fire steeple high into the air; I remember nothing further until I found myself in bed, bandaged out of the semblance of humanity, and with the lieutenant aforesaid sitting beside me. By some oversight, the chirurgeon had left one of my eyes uncovered; with the which, rising on an elbow which hurt damnably, I surveyed my surroundings.

"Where are we?"

The lieutenant, laying me back on my pillows, was respectful. I deduced that I was in favor with Ser Luca.

"You are at Bugasto, Captain. In the anteroom of his Lordship's own chamber."

"What day is it?" I inquired, my voice sounding like a bee in a bottle.

"It is tomorrow, Captain," said the young man, meaning that I had been unconscious twenty-four hours.

"Did we take the castle?"

"We did, Captain; what was left of it."

"Any fighting?"

"There was none left to fight. We counted forty-eight dead men in the courtyard, in the midst of whom lay the Captain, under a large stone statue of Saint Peter."

"Candles to him for falling softly," says I—another vow which, alas! I failed to keep. "What of the rest of the garrison?"

"Most of it having been quartered in the south wall," says my subordinate, "it—er—"

"Did I say 'dismissed'?" I demanded, as he suddenly rose.

"The Captain's pardon, but Ser Luca left the strictest instructions that he be called when the Captain awoke. Instanter, his Lordship said."

"Come hither," says I. "Say, what shall I be? Well, or but sickly?"

"Oh—well! His Lordship is delighted."

A smart lad.

"Dismissed, then," says I; and, when his Lordship entered, was sitting bolt upright in bed. Aye, he came running in from his star chamber and, after dismissing the lieutenant, did everything but kiss me.

"Caradosso," says he, seating himself and laying his hand on my knee, "yon was a mighty deed. Mark yester with a white stone; it shall prove to have been a great day for thee."

I mumbled that I had but thought to do my duty; whereat, staring at me as perhaps the Egyptians stared at those earlier mummies, he said:

"Thy duty? Is it possible that thou believed I intended thee to take the castle, with only so many men?"

With but one eye at my disposal, I could not equal his expression of amaze; but I did my best.

"Then I did wrong—?"

"Nay, nay, a thousand times nay! 'Tis only that, having sent thee thither as decoy, I scarce expected to have thee fulfil that purpose and bring me a castle as well."

"Decoy?" I said, feeling somewhat faint.

"Why—but look you, Luigi. Such a man should know more than as a rule I let be known; besides, in the office thou art to hold henceforth, a knowledge of my affairs is necessary. To begin at the beginning, then—"

I am unable to recall, at this distance, just what this beginning may have been; I was feeling ill; and besides, my soul was filled, to the exclusion of the faculties, with memories of our dealings with that castle. I saw the fever swamp in which we had lain for a week; I heard the voice of his Lordship's agent urging me to activity; I saw that charge which Lucio had led to its end in fiery ruin. At which point in my reflections, Ser Luca said something which awoke me.

"—so thou seest," says he, "that verisimilitude was essential if the plan was to succeed; which is why I approved heartily of thy sending half thy army to its death. 'Ah-ha!' think I, when I heard this, 'he understands at least so much of my plans. All will be well.' "

"Understands?" I asked.

"What I have told thee—that it was necessary that the Count of Two Rivers have no suspicion that I was not wholly intent on the capture of Monterosso. He must think, as I said, that all my attention, and all my forces, were turned thither; he must have no suspicion of the other army which, as I say, was awaiting him."

"There was a second army?"

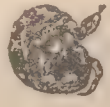
"Certes, to meet the Count of Two Rivers when he invaded my territory. He did so carelessly, believing me preoccupied as aforesaid; so that we defeated him handsomely. Which is all I had in mind when I sent thee to besiege Monterosso. And thou with no idea of any such thing! Ho-ho-ho!"

Obviously, there was naught to be said to such a man. Had I had the use of my face, I might have looked at him in such manner as to have stopped his abominable glee; but as it was, he could read no expression on my bandages, and so continued to laugh.

"Caradosso," says he, becoming serious at last. "Thou art to go far in my service, and I will show thee, now, as reward for thy work, what manner of master thou hast. Among the chuckleheads thou hast served before, was there any capable of confecting even such a plan as thou hast seen heretofore?"

I made a sound which, muffled as it was by bandages, he took to be something agreeable; and proceeded:

"Nay. They fought first, and thought afterward, if at all. I think first, and fight not at all unless it be necessary. For instance, all the fighting in this scheme is over; and I shall gain by it more than your Duke of Costecaldo, or your late master of Rometia, would gain in a ten-years' war. Look you. By seeming to attack Monterosso, I have defeated the Count of Two Rivers, to whom I have proposed the following terms of peace: either I take half his lands, to which I am entitled by conquest; or his sister marries the Lord of Rastelli, and I leave him his lands. There is little doubt which choice he will make, think you? Very well."



THERE was a fascination about him as he sat there, full of complexity. Thinking of those many dead men at Monterosso, I stared at him as, since, I have stared at a deadly snake, at once with horror and admiration.

"You will ask," he went on, though I was in no case to ask anything, "what interest have I in the marriage of the said Maria with Rastelli. Directly, none; but as I would remind thee, I am none of thy bull headed former masters, Luigi. I can see beyond the next move. Now the lady Maria is as though affianced to Lodovico della Fortezza Bianca; who as thou mayest know, is cousin to Gian Sforza that stands high among the bankers of Florence. Dost thou begin to see?"

I saw nothing, out of my one eye, but his face with its impenetrable black eyes; nothing, in the eye of my soul, but Lucio's charge and the other horrors of that siege.

"At the present," he went on, working

to his climax like a priest preaching, "there is a scarcity of money to lend. The Florentines have no more gold than will suffice for one big loan; application for the which hath been made, look you, by Jacopo di Savestra, who owns all these fat, rich, fruitful lands to the south of me. Who, being assured that his application shall succeed, and that he shall have money wherewith to wage a war, hath responded to certain provocations of mine in a way that will excuse me with the Council of Nobles, for what retaliation I may choose to make. Now mark you well, Luigi Caradosso! What shall Lodovici della Fortezza Bianca do, when he finds his darling wed to another? Shall he not desire to wage war on Rastelli; and for funds, shall he not turn forthright to his cousin? And, able to make but one loan, whom shall Gian Sforza favor—his own flesh, or a stranger? Certes his cousin. So that Jacopo di Savestra shall be left without money. And since the retaliation I propose is war—which, penniless, he may not wage successfully—I gain, within a month, his whole estate. On which thy Duke of Costecaldo, marching with ten thousand men but without my brains, might have spent ten years and a hundred thousand crowns, and then failed. Ha!"

He rose from his chair and stood gazing at me like one inspired—or possessed. A secretary came in and whispered something. He commanded that some one should be caused to wait; the man left.

"The day of violence is over, Caradosso," says he. "Luckily for thee, thou hast found a master abreast of the times. In token whereof, and in further reward for thee, thou shalt see what is next to come in the fruition of this plan. Lodovico della Fortezza Bianca waits without. Hast heard of him, eh?—a great blackguard giant commanding two thousand horse. By having thee assault Monterosso, he has come, as I have shown thee, into my power. It is for me to say whether his bride shall marry another. Mark how I keep him waiting, the more to impress him with my power. And I have further methods, to render him pliable for future use. When he enters—"

The door of the chamber flew back with a crash, and on those very words, Lodovico della Fortezza Bianca did enter; without permission, and in the act of disembarrassing himself of the secretary by flinging him downstairs. Stalking down the room, his shaggy head bent so that it might not strike the groining, he came to stand face to face with my lord Luca Bendello at the side of my bed. He was a gigantic man dressed in leather; with a jaw that projected some distance before his nose, and hands about the size of lambs' shoulders.

"Thou'st commanded Two Rivers to make his sister wed Rastelli," says he.

Turning his head aside, Ser Luca smiled at me. He pulled, moreover, a comfit box from his bosom and prepared to refresh himself.

"In that matter, dear Lord—" he began; but was interrupted.

"I ask thee," says Lodovico, "is it true? Wilt thou force Two Rivers to make his sister—"

Alack, I was sorry for him; much as any one not a Spaniard must be sorry for the bull charging the matador. In the manner of one of these last getting ready his sword for the kill, Luca moved one slim white hand.

"Now, now," says he suavely, "let us be calm and consider. *Imprimis*—"

"For the third time," says poor enmeshed Lodovico, "is Maria to wed Rastelli, or is she not?"

"She is," says my clever master, "for the following reasons, which I shall take pleasure in ex—"

And that, I grieve to say, is as far as he went with the second rehearsal of those astonishing plans, which have struck me as the most ingenious and fault proof ever I heard. It was likewise as far as the plans went; which I regretted, for that they had promised to include me, and that handsomely. Because at this moment, Lodovico della Fortezza Bianca seized the chair on which my lord had been sitting while expounding to me the

complexities aforesaid; and with this for weapon thereupon killed Ser Luca. I remember thinking (what time Lodovico stalked off, to marry Maria a week later) what havoc such things as arm muscles can make with even the finest thinking; also how like (now that his remarkable brains were on the floor) my poor lord looked to a bundle of old rags . . .

The which story was well known, and much laughed at, at the time; but apparently it hath been forgotten, for here is your Grace writing to know whether, for the winning of a large estate, your Lordship's son had better study logic at Padua, or at Bologna. So: if an old soldier, not asked for advice save by accident, may nevertheless give it, he would say (for the above reason) "Neither"; subscribing himself humbly, gratefully, and with prayers that his presumption may be pardoned

—L. CARADOSSO

Post Scriptum: But if your Excellency desires education that shall really be of use to a young noble in the circumstances stated—the butcher of this village hath need of an apprentice.

—L. C.

A Monkey Trap

By CAPTAIN MANSFIELD

THE ISLAND of Basilan, P. I., is overrun with monkeys that steal everything available in the way of food. The manager of a sawmill, growing tired of complaints from workmen whose lunches were continually being carried off, devised a means of extermination. He had a cage built of common slats two by four by four feet. On the top side of the cage was inserted, half in and half out, an eight-liter gasoline can with the top and bottom cut out. Ripe bananas were placed in the bottom of the cage for bait.

It was easy for a monkey to descend through this pipe-like entrance, but when it seized a banana and tried to get out, its troubles began. It could get no purchase on the smooth tin; neither could it reach the can's top edge.

Then it set up a fierce chattering, which soon attracted other monkeys. They came on the run. All they could see was the ripe bananas which their friend in his excitement had forgotten to eat. They shot through in rapid succession until the cage had not even standing room. Spear and bolo were brought into play, and the natives had a feast of monkey meat, eating with great satisfaction the enemies that had stolen so many of their lunches.

In this way that particular neighborhood soon became free of the monkey pest.

A Story of the Big Timber, by the Author of "Paul Bunyan"

KING-JACK

By

JAMES STEVENS

IN HIS TIME Red Larson was the mightiest axman of the Olympic Peninsula timberlands. It was a hard title to hold. In Larson's day the ax was not simply a working tool of the timber mechanic; it was an actual source of life in the frontier wilderness. Not as melodramatic as the rifle and the pistol, its service was incomparably greater. The ax was the chief reliance of the American pioneer. There were renowned heroes of the hickory helve and steel bitted blade. Lincoln was a champion axman.

Larson, the red Dane, was never more than an obscure woodsman. But in the Gray's Harbor woods, where bull teams labored logs seven feet thick down the skidroads, he was a king-jack among axmen who had hewn their way from the Great Lakes pineries to the giant timber of the North Pacific coast.

The old-timers of Aberdeen still fire up at the sound of Red Larson's name.

Something like this:

"No chopper ever bested him in a fair timber fight. Red Larson had a kind of power with the ax that was more'n his muscle. The tool come nigh to life for him. He told stories of the ax as sailors tell 'em of ships. He sang to the blade when he whetted it down to a razor edge on the turnstone. The ax was life to Red Larson.

"Nobody never come nigh to bestin' him till he met up with Slasher Jack Sloan. He had a fear in him then, Red Larson did. It was of burnin' out into a snag of a man. Always declared he'd take his finish while his fire was still high. 'You'll never see the circle of ashes close around Red Larson.' His actual words. Had a way of slingin' 'em.

"The fear was fierce in him when he met up with Slasher Sloan . . ."

The pace setter of the Camp 3 chopping gang was telling an old tale. He faced the door of the long-stove. The fire was savage, blazing with a crackling roar through pitch shot sticks, fighting the chill of a wet Winter wind out of the bunkhouse. The oil lamps were unlighted. Red flares leaped from the vents in the stove door. They played over the axman's shaggy head, the ridges of muscled jaws and the hugeness of hunched shoulders. His knotty fingers were interlaced around the straight, polished handle of a double bitted felling ax. A harsh and rugged figure, this aspect was belied by the softness of a blue eyed gaze. There was a dream in it.

". . . And he lost his ax, this woodsman of the old, old times," said Red Larson, his voice as deep as the soft thunder of the wet wind in the forest. "For once he left his ax stuck in a pine, while he went with a troll who had tempted him to come to a cave for a swig of redeye. Somethin' like that. I was no more than a goslin' when I heard the story. Thirty year ago—"

For a moment the story teller was silent. His thick fingers stroked his right temple. Thin streaks of gray showed there. "Thirty year ago," muttered Red Larson again. The hand dropped back to the ax. The huge shoulders heaved, as though shaking off a weight.

"Anyhow, the woodsman was gone a long time. And when he staggered back for his ax, it was nowhere. It was the old, old times, remember. Trees were wild in those days. They would pull up their roots and go rovin' any time they felt like it. And as the woodsman staggered on about, never findin' his ax, he knew at last that the pine he'd stuck it in had run off while he was down openin' kegs of nails with the trolls.

"For a week and a day the woodsman hunted through the forest for his lost ax. Every day he bawled louder in grief for his loss. At last Thor, takin' a ride over the woods on a thundercloud, heard him, and rolled down to the timber.

" 'What the hell, lad?' says Thor, or somethin' like.

"Well, when the king-jack of the Scandahoovian gods has the story, he tries a trick on the woodsman. That evenin' Thor fetches around a bunch of axes. All but one was solid silver and gold. The one was a rusty plug of an ax, the woodsman's own that was lost.

" 'Take yer pick, lad,' says Thor.

"Now, men, here's the point. This woodsman had a heart for the ax he lived by, and for nothin' else. Did he grab for the axes of solid silver and gold? Not much! He simply hugs his own old ax to his ribs, and with tears in his eyes vows he'll burn up a bull for thanks to Thor every year hereafter.

"At that, Thor, honest god that he was, gives the lad all the silver and gold axes to boot.

"Well, men, when the other 'jacks hears of the lad's wealth, they all cunnin'ly proceed to lose their own axes. And to each man came Thor, with the lost iron axes among bundles of silver and gold ones, all solid. But these 'jacks were never true axmen in their hearts. They grabbed for the gold axes, claimin' them as the lost ones. For such greed Thor gave them nothin', not even

their own axes of iron. Instead, he drove them from the woods, and then he presented that whole timberland to the true hearted man of the ax. That lad was an ancestor of mine," said Larson solemnly, and was silent.

"Sounds mighty likely," said somebody. "You'll inherit that woods some day, I s'pose, and live like a timber baron."

"My ancestor was a drinkin' man," said Larson, more solemn than ever. "He traded his forest to the trolls for rotgut. I don't blame him. Likely I'd of done the same."

The circle around the long-stove had their jests over the yarn, but Red Larson paid them no mind. His fingers slowly stroked his temple. He brooded at the firelight. He looked more Celtic than Norse as he sat there in the flickering shadows. Certainly Larson had a strain of the Celt, inherited, no doubt, from the mating of some sea rover long ago. He had lived his youth among the shanty boys of Michigan, and had learned their ballads and tales.

There was a stir near the bunkhouse door.

"What's the matter of your lights?" It was the growl of Bat Hadlock, the bull of the woods. He had just returned from a trip to headquarters in Aberdeen. "What are you hellions doin'? Plottin' a murder?"

"Listenin' to Larson's lies," said a voice from the circle. "They won't stand the light."

MATCHES flared. The swinging lamps cast a yellow glow through the bunkhouse. The big axman lighted his pipe, shooting a hard stare at Hadlock through the blue curls of smoke. The two were at odds. Larson had no official authority, but his prowess with the ax automatically reduced the camp boss to a secondary figure. Hadlock's gray eyes had a triumphant glitter as he tramped into the circle.

"Hired a new mate for you, Larson. A lad who can hold his own with you sixty hours of any week. I'll bet on it." Hadlock's mouth twisted in a forced grin. "The Camp 3 woods is due to be burnt up."

"A lad?" said Red Larson slowly, staring into the fire. Then his hunched shoulders straightened with a fierce motion. "Where's he at? I want a look at him."

"He's still in Aberdeen." Hadlock's eyes narrowed in a malicious expression. "You're ramblin' in tomorrow to celebrate your birthday, ain't you, hey? Well, your new choppin' mate will come to camp when you do."

"Who is he?" said Larson flatly.

"He's known up in the Puget Sound country as Slasher Jack Sloan," said Bat Hadlock, plainly relishing his words. "Heard of him?"

Red Larson nodded once, and stared silently into the fire. There was a heavy stir of muscled bodies and a mutter of deep voices around the circle. Every logger here had heard of Slasher Jack. A young hellion, just turned twenty-one. Six feet and three inches of limber muscled fury with the ax. A fighting black devil when he was drinking in town. In the Christmas blowout on the Seattle skidroad Slasher Jack had taken Billy the Mug's saloon apart and slaughtered a bartender in the process. No doubt the threat of the law had driven him down to Aberdeen.

And now this Slasher Jack was hired for Camp 3, to swing an ax on the springboards and set the pace for the choppers with Red Larson!

"The lad's got another reason for stickin' in Aberdeen long as he can," said Bat Hadlock, with more of a bitter relish than ever. "He's teamed up with Julie Ravel. Know her, don't you, Larson? Anyhow, she's the little queen of the Oxbow Saloon and Dance Hall. Seems to of fell hard for Slasher Jack—"

Bat Hadlock suddenly decided that it was time to break into a violent fit of coughing. Larson had propped his ax against a bench and was turning a child-

like gaze on the bull of the woods. Hadlock was undeceived by that sweet and gentle expression. He knew it for the glow of the spark burning close to dynamite.

"Got soaked a-plenty drivin' out," he said, wheezing and spluttering into the folds of a bandanna. "Got to go get some dry clothes for myself. G'night."

Larson turned back to the fire. He swung up the ax so that the bits reflected the flames. His hand caressed the shining steel. For a long time he was like that, while the loggers talked. They repeated stories about Slasher Jack which had drifted down from Puget Sound. A king-jack with the ax. No doubt about it. Somebody said the lad had worked seven men off the springboards last year. Certainly he was after Red Larson's scalp. Sashaying with Julie Ravel, hey? That meant just one thing. Everybody in Aberdeen knew how thick Julie was with Red Larson. But a lad like Jack Sloan could take a dance hall girl from anybody . . .

Low voiced talk. Red Larson seemed to hear none of it. He stared on at the fire. Its flames ebbed. Through the vents he could see a stick against the stove wall, graying with a fringe of ash.

The axman kicked the door open with a drive of his boot. He crammed in sticks of pitchy wood. The flames leaped high again.

"Like that," muttered Red Larson. "For me, never a burnout."

MIDNIGHT was two hours away when Red Larson led a gang of celebrating loggers into the Oxbow. He had been buying a round for each year of his life.

"We take on the rest of 'em here," he said. "Mark off twelve. Start here with the thirteenth, and to hell with luck!"

The bar was lined three deep. The reflectors of hanging lamps poured light on the loaded bar. Red liquor gurgled from bottles tilted by hairy hands. Out on the dance floor the checks of mackinaws blazed vividly among the short scarlet skirts of the girls. Calked boots thumped and thin slippers pattered on the plank floor in time with a fiddle's shriek and an accordion's blare.

Larson shot one searching glance among the dancers, then wheeled to the bar. He poured his drink, and twitched a double eagle jingling through the glasses. A bartender snatched it, then forked out two small gold pieces and a heap of silver in change. Larson let the pile lie among the beads of moisture trailing the bartender's swab. He hoisted his glass slowly, peering over it into the bar mirror. Then he was motionless, staring hard.

Through a back door which opened from a restaurant stepped Julie Ravel. A tree of a man in a mackinaw with dark red checks loomed behind her. They joined the dancers. It was a waltz.

Larson's head went back as he downed his drink. But his gaze never shifted from the moving image in the mirror, the young woodsman and the girl waltzing slowly under the swinging lamps, from yellow glow to yellow glow. Despite his calked boots, Jack Sloan was as easy in his tread as a panther. Youth in him was swelling triumphantly into the full force of manhood. As yet neither liquor, labor nor battle had touched him.

"Peach blossom," muttered Larson, as the two waltzed close.

Indeed, the lad's cheeks were as fresh and glowing as a girl's. The two were near now. They had eyes only for themselves. Julie was saying something:

"Never I will leave you, Jack! Not for Red Larson . . . Dance wit' me, Jack —all night long. Dance wit' me . . . "

Slasher Jack laughed softly. His teeth shone. The whites of his eyes were as clean as new silver. The waltz went on.

Red Larson glared up at his own reflection in the mirror. Grimly he noted every deep line in his face. They twisted

among old scars. The pits in his right cheek—ground in by the spiked heel of Paddy the Wolf in the Seeney Stockade, the hell-hole of the wild Michigan woods. Twenty years since. He was twenty-one then himself.

He might work Paddy's trick on the peach blossom lad now. You peeled off your mackinaw, then suddenly flung it in the face of your man. You went in with your boot for the groin. Then a river jack's leap, your spikes flashing and twisting down.

Larson had shoved himself back from the bar. Light shone through his opened mackinaw. Its rays glanced clean from the polished blade jutting above his thick belt of boar's hide.

"Steady, old-timer," said Red Larson to himself. "No barroom fight for a dance hall chippy. Not with another axman."

He was an axman. So was Slasher Jack Sloan. But there was a challenge here which had to be met. Whenever Red Larson came to town, Julie Ravel was his girl. The crowd in the Oxbow knew it.

He had never been fooled by Julie. Larson knew these girls as he knew trees. They had no sensation stronger than the itch for coin. In its glitter, the glamor of Jack Sloan's youth would soon subside for Julie Ravel.

Larson's knotted hand swept up the heap of silver and gold as the two drew close again in the drifting circle of the dance. He waited until Julie was facing him, then he flung the coins to the ceiling. They fell in a shining and ringing shower.

"For Julie Ravel!" roared Red Larson. "The sweetest waltzer in the house!"

He grinned in sardonic triumph as Julie broke from Slasher Jack's encircling arm. Her little white hands clawed for the two gold pieces, then raked the scattered silver together. Jack Sloan stared down at her, bewildered, then angry as laughs and jests sounded from the crowd at the bar. The dance was suspended. Even the fiddler and accordion player were gaping and grinning.

"To hell with you!" Slasher Jack growled savagely at Julie. "Makin' a show of me!" Then he swung for the grinning axman at the bar. "Who are you, and what did you mean by a play like that?" he demanded ominously.

"I'm Red Larson," was the slow and easy answer. "And you're my new choppin' mate, ain't you, hey?" He shoved out a hand. "How about shakin'? What's a chippy for a pair of axmen like us to battle over? We've got a timber fight comin' up. The like of that has to be settled in the woods, with the ax!"

It was a challenge. There was a smother of silence over the crowd as young Sloan's stare searched the eyes of the champion of the axmen. They narrowed in a shrewd scrutiny. Here was no rowdy of the saloons, decided Red Larson. It was the wildness of the deep woods that blazed in the stare of Jack Sloan. The primitive stuff of the wilderness was hot in his blood. There was an old Michigan term for such men: "Pine woods savages". Red Larson himself owned that fierce primal strain. From it rose his strongest fighting impulse, at the threat of a rival axman.

"I'm with you, old-timer." The force was speaking from Jack Sloan, though he did not understand it. "Our fight's in the woods." He looked around once at Julie, but turned back regretfully to the bar. It was roaring again. Already the loggers were arguing, in their own language, over the probable outcome of the chopping duel between young blood and the veteran in the woods. It was plainly an affair of great import to these woodsmen. Jack Sloan laughed uneasily. Then he remembered that he was the Slasher from the Puget Sound country. He shouldered up to Red Larson.

"Sure. What's a woman to a team of axmen like us?"

Apparently Larson was not listening. He was fumbling at his temple with his right hand. Muttering to himself——

"Fourteen rounds—one for a year—twenty-seven more to go—too many . . ."

NIGHT thundered up the timbered hills from tidewater. For a week, beginning with the first day of Red Larson and Slasher Jack Sloan as springboard mates, a storm had surged from the North Pacific. Now, with twilight, furious blasts were roaring through the boughs, driving the rain like spears.

"Old Thor, he's on my side," thought Red Larson half seriously. "And don't I need him, though!"

He was driving his blade into the heartwood of a trunk four feet thick. Throughout the week Larson had set the pace, but the Slasher's swing relentlessly matched his own. Each axman stood on a springboard set solidly in a notch just above the root spread of the trunk. Young Sloan was chopping from the left. His mackinaw was off. Rain and sweat mingled to darken his red shirted shoulders, which worked like the beam of a steam engine in the pull and drive of his ax. So far the big lad had apparently not extended himself. Only the power of his magnificent young body had gone into the timber fight. Slasher Jack could imagine only one outcome to the chopping duel with this scarred and grizzled veteran. Unworried, he thought often of Julie Ravel. He was sorry he had turned on her so roughly. He couldn't understand it. On Saturday night he would tramp into Aberdeen and fix that.

Now the week's work was nearing an end. Over on the skidroad the bull-puncher was taking down the last turn of logs. The great oxen, ten of them, plodded through the dark, dripping brush. The bellowed "H'ist!" of the puncher resounded dully in the wet wind. The logs rumbled over the skids, vanished.

Deeper shadows. There was a shout from the adjoining felling strip. Bat Hadlock was calling the choppers from work. Slasher Jack straightened, and grinned around the tree at Red Larson. The only response was a swift rise in the rhythm of ax blows. Sloan's eyes were like an Indian's as he threw his blade into the undercut again.

The ax blows resounded in the time of a swift march: crang—crang—crang—crang! The clip of the bits flashing into heartwood shot out big yellow chips in a curving stream. Yet every blow was true. The lower surface of the undercut was horizontal through the trunk, as smooth as though worked by a jackplane. The upper slanted fairly toward the heart of the tree. Two swings for every thick chip. The first was underhanded, a drive of the blade along the lower surface. Then an overhanded slash to send the chip flying. The surfaces of the undercut were drawing together.

"Hey!" bawled Bat Hadlock. "Didn't you hear me call you off?"

No answer. Hadlock and the other choppers waited, watching with eyes that brightened through the weariness of the day's labor. It was something to see, that red bull of a Larson there, giving the ax everything he had. In his solid crouch, the bulk of the axman seemed to be no more than an anchor for his shoulders and arms and chest. They pivoted the blade with such smooth force that the watching axmen unconsciously swayed in the rhythm. All were dim shapes in the rainy twilight. Above them the boughs soughed in the wild wind. For the moment they were savages in the dawn of the age of iron, where the axblade first rang in the arboreal homes of mankind.

The veteran chief and the young one were fighting it out. The oldest drama of the race. The ax was still a mighty symbol in the woods. The axman was yet a hero here.

An inarticulate sense of this held every man in the gang of woodsmen. And now the primitive strain was

awake in the Slasher. The pride and strength of youth blazed out of him. But the lad was not yet free of his rawness. His whole body went into the effort of his swing. Yet he kept the pace furiously until the undercut was finished. Then he hurled his ax at a stump and reached for the crosscut saw.

The crosscut had not yet surpassed the ax in the work of the woodsmen. The saw pulled by Larson and Slasher Jack had no raker patterns to make a swift cut in big timber. Its main purpose was to insure the felling of two-hundred-foot trees without breakage. Wedges were mauled into the saw kerf opposite the undercut so as to direct the fall of the tree accurately. The crosscut was the first invasion of the machine in the wilderness. As Sloan and Larson sawed through to the undercut they again became plain workers in the woods.

The teeth cramped. Wedges were driven. The Douglas fir crashed down, a sweeping blacker shadow against the settling gloom of the forest night.

Slasher Jack Sloan instantly swung over to Bat Hadlock.

"How about draggin' a few dollars tonight? Me, I got to go in to Aberdeen and get my teeth fixed."

This was the traditional excuse of loggers, when the pull of liquor and girls was too strong to resist.

"You'll have to nurse that toothache of yours, lad," said Red Larson, before Hadlock could speak. "I'm takin' not even a Sunday off from now to Spring. That goes for you, if you figger to stand up with me on the springboards. But maybe you've already got a bellyful—"

The Slasher whirled, his fists up.

"None of that," said Larson easily, his own hands open and down. "We've got nothin' to battle over. That was agreed down in the Oxbow. We're here to chop timber." He shrugged his great shoulders. "If you've had enough of this, all right. But I'm the boss chopper in this here camp, and whoever takes the springboard with me has got to follow my lead. Seventy hours a week from now on. What about it?"

"What you're askin' for you'll get." The Slasher's black eyes flickered redly in the shadows, but he had a grip on his temper. In a flash he saw why this scarfaced axman had made that play with Julie in the Oxbow, and the reason for this one. Red Larson was over the hump, going down. He had lived in the stress and strain of the hardest human labor on earth. The Slasher had seen other such axmen go. Suddenly the shakes hit their legs. They sagged on the springboards. Larson was fighting that. "Right with you, old-timer," said the big lad grimly. "Only from now on it's not you who sets the pace, but me. Tomorrow mornin' I take the lead. What you make of that?"

Larson nodded, and swung on down the dark trail. He had what he wanted, a last famous fight with the ax. The spirit of it was aroused in the Slasher, and in the gang of choppers. About them closed the black shadows of the stormy woods, as ancient and mysterious as human life itself. An old chief was leading his tribe into the shelter of camp. He bore the challenge of a young axman. The primitive strain was awake.

AS DAY followed day in the woods, Camp 3 seemed even farther removed from the life of the tidewater towns. The work of late Winter was laid out, and the crew of veteran loggers was sticking to make road stakes for roving in the break of Spring. All the living interest of the woodsmen was in the struggle between Red Larson and Slasher Jack Sloan.

The weather still favored the older axman as Winter crept two weeks nearer to Spring. There was a steady drift of ponderous and shaggy clouds from the gloomy wastes of the Pacific. The masses of boughs dripped endlessly. At night the bunkhouse steamed with the rank smells of drying wool. By day the woodsmen were harsh, dull figures in

the dark forest. Even the vivid hues of mackinaws were smothered by the primeval gloom.

As each morning forced its first gray light through the wet, roaring boughs, Red Larson was the first to take the springboard. The muscles of his legs were like wire rope as he took a solid foothold, sprung his knees and crouched for the first swing. That feel of iron in his legs was his certainty of power for the day ahead. There was no fear for the rest of himself. These shoulders and arms of his could swing the blade on forever.

The hands of Larson, the red Dane, sang for the ax. There was a gentleness in the thick, knotty fingers as they ran down the slim handle. His eyes glowed as he raised the whetted blade. Even in the gray shadows of rain its bits shone. Blood leaped hotly in his arms as the ax curved out in a level half-circle, then seemed to plunge with a force of its own for the tree. Halfway to helve the blade always sank into the bark and grain. Never too deep. The axman did not bury his blade so that a wrench was needed to break it out. A sharp twist, an overhanded swing, a slanting downward thrust, the shot of a huge chip—crang—crang—crang! The march song of the ax rang through the forest.

Larson never wasted a glance on the giant of a lad who faced him. He knew the surging young strength of the Slasher. It was more than his own. But there was also the frailty of youth in Jack Sloan. He was more of the fighter than the axman, as Larson himself had been at that age. There was a hunger in him for the blazing life of the Oxbow, for the passion of Julie Ravel. As the bleak, oppressive weather persisted, the Slasher's nerves got raw. He flared into tempers.

"He'll bust loose yet with his fists," the gang in the bunkhouse agreed. "Jest too young to stand such a grind."

But the Slasher never forgot that any time he threw down his ax and turned the timber fight into a personal battle he was beaten before he started. Any barroom plug-ugly in Aberdeen might lick Larson in a fist-and-boot battle, This was a struggle of axmen.

The spirit of the pine woods savage made Slasher Jack Sloan fight on with the ax. For two weeks he failed to take the lead, to increase the speed of his swing above Larson's and set the pace. Then he got his break. The weather cleared. Spring flew its first brilliant banners. The timbered hills lay like giant pillows of green against a clean sheet of blue sky. It was youth's season.

The big lad had a laugh for the shining morning. Again Larson was the first to mount the springboards, but even as he set himself the Slasher was up and swinging in. He took the lead with the first blow. He held it. Red Larson regarded him now, desperately, as he tried to force his own swing into a swifter rhythm. Youth was triumphant under the sun. Jack Sloan was wildly alive from his calks to his coal-black mop of hair. He was on his toes, his whole body working, with never a sign of strain.

"Young legs," thought Larson grimly. "A young heart. The sap is rising in him as in the trees."

There was no beating the big lad this day. Larson resigned himself, and settled down to holding his own. It was a terrific ten hours. They were chopping into a stand of huge firs. Over an hour of steady swinging for each tree. Then a lunge for the saw. A fierce drag until the wedges were mauled in. As the tree crashed they were reaching for their springboards and tools. On to another tree. Chop out the notches. Shove in the boards. A leap up. Never straighten. Drive in the blade.

Crang—crang—crang—crang! On and on, till the last red streak of sunset was smothered in the timberland night.

Three days of that. Red Larson's one hope was for a return of black weather. The Winter was not over. He had that

chance. Jack Sloan was so wild to make a finish now because of his burning eagerness to get to town. To Julie. To any girl! He was in the spell of Spring, the season of youth. Just that.

But the sun shone on. A clear sky was over the woods on a Saturday morning. A breeze whispered from the west. For once the Slasher spoke as they mounted the springboards.

"She's my day, Larson," he said, his Indian's eyes glittering with exultant confidence. "Before the sun swims down I finish you. You're done—by that." He pointed a forefinger at Larson's right knee. "Tonight I roll into Oxbow with your scalp at my belt."

Larson made no reply. He swung his ax. It was true. The lad had pegged him. The ragged fringe of his stagged breeches leg had been trembling as he set himself for work. The shakes were in his knees. Not so bad—they were gone now, as his blood leaped—but a warning, it might be, of his finish.

Well, if it was so, it had to be. Red Larson was ready to take any fate that struck him. He wanted woodsmen to say after him, "There was an axman, that Larson. Nobody ever beat him with the ax." He wanted that alone. It seemed little enough. But let any man try working for that for twenty years. Then it was something that filled one's heart. What else had he worked for? The blow-ins, the waste of his mean wages for redeye and girls? When he was a young woodsman, perhaps. But not in his harder years. Julie was nothing to him. He would not lift a finger to keep Jack Sloan from her. No, it was his power with the ax that he held fast to his heart. Was he to lose it now to the young fighter?

Slow hour by slow hour, a torment of labor. And at noon the Slasher growled:

"Will you work straight on, bully? Or are you ready to quit?

Red Larson whipped up his ax. He had no breath to waste in words. It was a fair challenge. He had to take it. And it was better to chop on, keeping the heat in his legs.

ANOTHER giant of the forest was brought down in the noon hour. The day beat on. The ring of the ax filled Larson's head. The feel of iron was out of his legs. Lead seemed to be in them now. The lowering sun drove its rays into his eyes, blinding him to everything but the flashing circle of his blade. Still it matched the furious sweep of the Slasher's ax. Swing and drive—swing and drive—but he could not last. The certainty closed on Red Larson as he crouched on his springboard at a new tree.

A black kind of feeling was on him. It even clouded his eyes now from the sun. But there was the flash of his blade, curving out steady and true. Still on his feet—then a snarled oath from the Slasher ripped through the haze about him.

There was a hard rush of wind. Quickening, Larson stared into it. The drift of a spreading cloud had shut out the sun. The wind swept his face with a wet and chilling touch.

Black weather, his own kind. Something lifted a hope in Larson's heart. Something foolish, but it was strong. Thor was with him. The spirit of Valhalla was for the man who had been true to a hard life. It was cloud and rain to Jack Sloan, but it was hope for the old chief of the ax. Red Larson swung into the tree. He had snatched the lead. The Slasher had to follow him now, and take the pace if he could.

The tree was another shaggy giant, six feet through the trunk. Larson started a huge gap for the undercut. The Slasher saw his purpose. It was to chop straight through to a fall, without using the crosscut and wedges. The young axman swore again as he drove in, matching the undercut on his side of the tree. He was on his toes, swinging in a fury to surpass Larson's lightning pace.

Jack Sloan had the muscle, the skill,

the surging fire of youth. He threw all of himself into the struggle now, but it was not enough.

Red Larson was caught up in the sweep of the highest tide of passion the life of man may know. It is the nameless force which has inspired all the heroic enterprises and feats of mankind. He was only an axman, but he had the spark, and it blazed now. There was neither time nor place for Red Larson. He was the axman of the centuries, the son of the blade and helve, in every breath, every beat of his heart, in each muscle and nerve. All melted together in an irresistible force.

Larson, the red Dane. A name woodsmen should never forget. He knew it, as the Slasher's face reddened and swelled, as he choked vainly for breath, and faltered in his swing. But the big lad would not yield. He drove himself. His chest heaved in enormous gasps, his ribs shook from his hammering heart. The Slasher missed a swing. The jerk of the ax pulled him over. He crashed from the springboard. This last terrific hour had finished him.

Larson let his blade rest, and stared down at the Slasher. Then he felt it—a shake in his legs. He had burned himself out. In another minute he would be down by the man he had beaten. Such a tide of life could never rise for him again. He had lived his time.

Bat Hadlock and the other choppers were swarming from the woods. They were seeing him as the victor. He must finish so.

Red Larson chopped again. Deeper, deeper, on his side of the undercut, until the chips were narrow splinters. The shaggy trunk shivered. There was a crackling of wood fibers. He gripped his ax to his chest and glanced up. The green crown was sweeping over, twisting his way, following the pull of the one-sided undercut. He stood fast, his legs shaking now like the windblown boughs. He had to hold up for another instant more. So he must be seen at the end, on his feet, Larson the victorious axman.

The cloud overhead seemed to open. The timberland was swept with an immense burst of light. Red Larson had a vision of Thor flinging down axes of silver and gold. But he was holding his own to himself when the great tree struck, gripping the working tool of the axman to his heart . . .

"It took a tree to finish Red Larson," say the Aberdeen old-timers. "No man ever lived who could have bested him with the ax."

By the author of "Four Years beneath the Crescent"

GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

The GATES *of* GAZA

FOR some time before the Second Battle of Gaza I had been stationed at Beersheba, acting under Prince Essad, commander of the left wing of the Turkish Expeditionary Forces on the Sinai Front. Consequently I was in the thick of the action when the battle broke. As in the First Battle of Gaza, that memorable action in which thirty thousand Turkish soldiers defeated nearly twice that number of veteran British and Australian troops, Colonel von Kress commanded the Turkish forces. While the First Battle of Gaza is generally considered to be the most decisive combat of the World War in the Near Orient, the Second Battle, which again saw the Crescent victorious over the Lion of St. George, was not lacking in fierce and brilliant action.

The battle lines drew together on the morning of April nineteenth, 1917; and all that forenoon we spent with one foot in the stirrup. The far-off thunder of artillery, which kept gradually increasing, and the going and coming of the enemy planes, dropping bombs, told us that the battle had already commenced in the vicinity of Gaza. There our right wing successfully bore the brunt of the

enemy attack and forced the English to try their luck with the right flank of our center: that is, against the Heights of Abu-Hureira, where Lieutenant-Colonel Rifat Bey had entrenched himself with our Third and Fifth Infantry Divisions.

The battle shock there between Turks and Britishers was also terrific, especially in front of the smoking hill of Esani-Koi, where our fire swept ceaselessly the waves of the enemy's assault. Like the breeze preceding the hurricane, tearing off branches of trees and raising dust clouds in its advance, there rose in front of us, or rather, in front of our center, which was Tel-es-Sheriat, dense columns of smoke, to which our artillery replied with thunder.

We were in the thick of the Second Battle of Gaza.

Only the enemy right wing, composed of the main body of British cavalry, kept its position, crowning like a steel wall a series of low hills on our left, which extended for about eight kilometers south of Tel-es-Sheriat and formed, near a point called Esmeli, a right angle with the right flank of the enemy center. Everybody seemed to realize that the decision of the battle would rest in the encounter between the three regiments of our Third Cavalry Division and the ten or more regiments of enemy cavalry, both English and Australian, which threatened our left wing.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when a mounted aide-de-camp emerged from a cloud of dust, dashed down in our direction, reined in, saluted, and handed Colonel Essad Bey the order to advance. This was tantamount to a sentence of execution, and we all knew it.

Upon hearing the order I glanced swiftly over the faces of our officers; and the expression on their bronzed countenances, which reflected utter fearlessness, remains for me one of the most cherished memories of my four years beneath the Crescent.

FIRST to proceed from our zone of entrenchments at Tel-es-Sheriat was the Seventh Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Cherkess Mehmed Bey. Then followed the Sixth, and lastly the Eighth, which immediately changed front, facing south, deployed in battle formation, and advanced by trotting and pacing against the right flank of the enemy cavalry. Meanwhile the Sixth and the Seventh, followed by our field batteries and machine gun detachments, dashed forward in close formation, with redoubled speed, against Esmeli, which, as I said before, formed the right angle, or junction, between the enemy's center and right wing. Our orders were to break the English front and force their cavalry to retreat or to fight separately.

Our mission was not lacking in temerity. It was almost impossible for us to cover the three or four kilometers which separated us from Esmeli without becoming an easy target for the whole of the British artillery, or without giving the enemy cavalry an opportunity to launch itself against our left flank, crushing us against their center. Fortunately our advance was swift and unexpected. Before the enemy could realize our intention, we had already crossed the Wadi-Sheriat near Esmeli and had broken through the first British positions.

This separated the enemy's right wing from its center, as we had planned to do. Nevertheless, if the British cavalry commander had calmly faced the fire of our divisional artillery and, making an oblique movement to the left, had attacked our rear even with only part of his mounted forces, he could have annihilated our Eighth Regiment with all ease, and entered Tel-es-Sheriat with banners flying.

But he did nothing of the sort. Instead, pursued by the fire of our divisional artillery, he took refuge with all his cavalry behind the enemy center, while several heroic Australian machine gun detachments protected his retreat

with truly remarkable boldness and sang-froid.

Seeing the tenacious resistance offered by these detachments, which, be it said in passing, had entrenched themselves hastily on a tongue of land formed by the confluence of the Wadi-Sheriat and Abu-Hureira, I decided to attack them from the rear with the assistance of our Arab volunteers whom I could see, by the thousands, well mounted and armed, crowning a line of hillocks behind our lines.

With that purpose in mind, I set out in their direction with a squadron of Lancers. We swiftly crossed the danger zone which was swept by the ceaseless fire of the enemy batteries, and finally reached the place whence our Arab volunteers were observing the battle, well out of reach of the enemy's fire; and they, with the exception of about eighty, flatly refused to accompany us, because it was not fighting but looting that they were after.

Wheeling about and taking advantage of the natural shelter offered us by the surrounding landscape, we kept approaching the Australian machine gun detachments, step by step, sharpshooting, whenever we got a chance, at their left wing which, like a bull tormented by a hornet, from time to time turned their guns on us in a vain effort to beat us off. Cautiously and slowly, but surely, we kept following the course we had mapped out until, a short distance behind the Australians' firing line, we noticed several portable telephone wires which seemed to connect those detachments with their headquarters.

Realizing the advantage of destroying those wires, thus cutting the enemy from its base, I resolved to do just that; but, as I did not want to sacrifice my men and, as in order to cut those wires we would have to leave the sheltering ravine, along which we were advancing, and cover a couple of hundred yards at a gallop, I rode out *dört-nalda*, which means at full speed, followed only by my orderly, Tasim Chavush, and a white bearded Arab sheik, magnificent in a crimson *kaftan*.

OUR enterprise was risky, almost suicidal, but on this occasion Allah obligingly took our part once more. Without being molested by the enemy—and how, indeed, were they going to suspect that we were Turks?—we reached our goal in the twinkling of an eye. We jumped off our horses and hacked the wires to pieces with our swords; while the Australians, coming to from their amazement, turned most of their machine guns in our direction and at a distance of some five hundred yards opened a sharp fire which raised columns of dust all about us.

The Arab sheik's mount collapsed at the first shots, and I did not see the sheik again. Tasim and I jumped back into our saddles and literally grew wings. Meantime the enemy had cut off our retreat; so we started toward our own battle line, from which we were still several hundred yards away. Bullets whistled past us like hail. Dervish, my favorite Arab stallion, though he went like wildfire, seemed to me as slow as a tortoise. In spite of the fact that seconds seemed hours, I soon noticed behind the first row of our machine guns, which had stopped firing so as not to hit us, the bodies of Captain Nessis Effendi and Lieutenant Seki, lying behind their dead horses and seeming to beckon to us with cold hands to dash into a *wadi* which loomed on our left.

When we were only a couple of yards from the ravine I felt something like a lash, followed by a sharp pain, in my right thigh. This made me lose my balance and roll with my horse down the slope. Tasim came tumbling after me, fortunately with no greater damage than having the back of his saddle shattered by a bullet.

After a thorough examination of our bones and those of our horses, we had a look also at my wound, which was slight; and Tasim stanched the flow of

blood by plastering it with a chew of tobacco which stung a little, but stopped the bleeding. To get away from that ravine, which was dangerous because stray enemy shells dropped into it occasionally and burst, sometimes only a hand's breadth away from us, we scurried along the bottom of several branching ravines, which the enemy fire swept intermittently, until at last we reached our squadron, which had long since given us up for dead.

Just then some enemy planes flew over us, pursued by the shells of our anti-aircraft batteries; while a squadron of mounted infantry and a battalion of the line, also ours, hastened to occupy advanced positions in front of Abu-Hureira. This, added to the ever diminishing fire of our gallant foes as evening fell, convinced me that the English had given up the struggle and were in full retreat.

We rode slowly across hills and valleys, leaving behind us, to the east, the blue mountains of Judea, which seemed dim visions a great distance away. Esani-Koi changed gradually from a flaming pyre into a silent pyramid, darkened by the shadows of the sun setting behind the bare dunes; the evening star rose majestically above the somber skyline; and the moon began to mantle with pale fire the roughened desert sands.

After the roar of battle, the silence now seemed complete. It was broken only by the breeze rustling through the dry brushes, the weird moaning of the jackals, or the screams of the wounded which, vibrating mysteriously from rock to rock, to die out in sighs, sent a shudder through me and made me feel as if only ourselves and the Angel of Death were riding across those dark, silent *wadis*.

At every step we risked stumbling or falling headlong, or being picked off by the bullets of our own Arab volunteers who were scouring the desert in search of corpses to despoil or wounded soldiers to dispatch—scenting them out like wild beasts. I glimpsed these vandals in every direction, slinking through the nocturnal shadows and carefully avoiding close encounter with us through fear lest we be a Christian (English) patrol. More than one of those human hyenas, surprised in *flagrante delicto*, raised his bloody scimitar; then, seeing by our lances that we were not English, but Turks, that is, True Believers, he tranquilly continued his ghastly job, since to kill and mutilate Christians, especially *Inglis giaours*, even when they were wounded, represented for our ex-Arab volunteers—who composed a year later the majority of Emir Feizal's "Liberating Army"—a pious act which opened to them the doors of Paradise.

REPEATEDLY I noticed in the semi-darkness heaps of light forms, which, on closer inspection, I recognized with a sickening sense of horror as the nude, mutilated bodies of dead or wounded English soldiers—victims of our ex-Arab volunteers, that is to say, those same human vampires who, after passing over into the tribal army of Emir Feizal, the son of Sheriff Hussein of Mecca, treated their Turkish and German prisoners in this same fashion . . .

As we continued our march through the sinister darkness, thronged with moving phantoms, the picture presented by those fiends incarnate, of hideous countenance and diabolical expression, stooping over their defenseless, bleeding, screaming victims, were indelibly impressed on my mind. Suddenly we stopped short at the voice of an Arab who had served as my scout the day before. He was leading by the halter his horse, laden with such booty as rifles, bloody uniforms, belts, shoes and the like—in short, whatever he had found on the dead or wounded British whom he had discovered that night.

As the unspeakable culmination of his ghoulish prowess, he produced a long, whitish object, which I did not recognize at first, until by the light of my

electric torch I saw that it was a human arm lopped off above the elbow. It was richly tattooed in bright colors and, to judge by the rudder and anchor on the inner forearm, must have belonged to an English sailor. When I asked him, in amazement, why he was taking along this memento, he replied that he wanted to show it to his wife, who greatly admired well tattooed pictures.

He added, ingeniously, that, if he only had had a little more time, he would also have taken the man's entire back because it was handsomely adorned with a huge blue and crimson serpent.

To prevent his continuing to defame that poor relic, I bought the arm from him for a silver *mechedieh* and had it decently buried by one of my Lancers.

Whenever I remember that hyena in human disguise and his comrades, our ex-Arab volunteers, so eulogized in Mr. T. E. Lawrence's book, "Revolt in the Desert", I am disgusted to think that modern warfare has any place in its scheme of things for such barbarity.

Meanwhile we had come to the Esmeli road, a wavering line in the moonlight enveloped by dust clouds, as a convoy of wounded Turkish soldiers filed slowly along it. The majority of those unfortunates were suffering from serious wounds; some of them were dying. But I did not hear a groan. I saw only here and there a trembling hand, extended as if imploring water to appease a devouring, terrible thirst.

As I watched that sublime picture—that handful of heroes who were breathing their last in agony, without uttering a complaint, not even a moan—I could not help remembering Napoleon's famous words: "With Turkish soldiers commanded by foreign officers I would have been able to conquer the world!"

Instantly I drew up my squadron and had it present arms to that group of dying heroes.

Continuing

A South Seas Novel by the Author of "Cannibal Nights"

MAC, skipper of the notorious trading bark *Emma P,* Kennedy, his hard fisted mate, and I, second mate, had gone ashore the morning we met Tom Hawley with the simple intention of painting the Sydney waterfront red. But the story Tom told us, backed up as it was by a giant pearl mussel, had us laying a course as early as that evening for the island of Vanua Lava . . .

Hawley told us that he had stolen the splendid shell from Van Asvelt, blackbirder and all-around renegade, who had shanghaied him. He further related that the lagoon at Vanua Lava was scarcely touched as yet, Van Asvelt being forced to flee blacks made savage by wanton murder of their numbers by the slaver. Tom went on to describe a great cave that could be entered at low tide, into which he had tried to escape from the murderous Van Asvelt. And from his pocket he produced a curious yellow, crescent shaped object.

"Broke off in my hand," he explained. "The walls of that cave are plastered with 'em—"

"Birds' nests!" exploded Mac. "Man, if what you say is true, there's a fortune in them things. It's what the chinks make birds' nest soup out of—an' nowadays they come high!"

Dropping anchor off Vanua Lava a week or so later, we were mystified by the wrecked hull of a schooner lying in the shallow waters of the lagoon. But I, my fancy caught by the black mouth of the cave Tom had described to us, lost no time in pulling for it in a small boat. Once in the grotto I forgot the passage of time in contemplation of the marvelous marine life below me. Suddenly I realized I was trapped—a prisoner of the rising tides.

FULL MOON TIDE

By

CAPTAIN RAABE

Blindly I groped about the weird and gloomy maze. After great difficulty I came out upon a small clearing—to discover that the opening was a long tunnel upward, which ended upon a queer rock platform. Gruesome remnants were strewn upon it. It dawned on me that I was beholding a fearsome altar for human sacrifice!

When the tide went down I regained the ship and told my fantastic tale. Mac decided to impress the savages with a mysterious show of power. Accordingly at nightfall Tom, Bunk, our bosun, and I entered the cave with several kegs of powder. Long before we reached the opening, the smell of smoke told us that a fire had been lighted for the sacrifice. And then, just before we arrived at the point where I planned to set our charge, we stumbled upon and rescued a bound white man. Hastily we placed our powder, lighted the fuse, and beat a frantic retreat.

We were already back to our small boat when the charge went off with a hollow roar. Then we set about reviving the man we had saved. Presently he managed to speak—to tell us that he was Father Delaney, a missionary priest.

"But Jeany—Jean Bradley, my niece!" he cried wildly. "She was tied in a cage facing the sacrificial altar!"

WHEN our minds began to clear sufficiently to make complete understanding possible, Tom groaned—

"Good Lord—the explosion!"

It seemed incredible that all this should be truth. And yet, to men who were acquainted with the fiendish fanaticism of some of the tribes on remote islands, such deeds of cruelty as the

compulsion of one victim to watch the torture of another did not appear at all unreal.

The preposterous part was that there should be a woman, a young girl, whom fate had thrown at the mercy of such beasts. And then that men, unaware of the existence of the unfortunate victims, should at such a critical moment have planned the destruction of the most diabolic means of torture ever devised.

Coincident? No! It must have been willed so by Providence. But could Providence have blundered in the proper timing of the events? Hardly probable after having taken such pains.

I for one was too confused to see a ray of hope. In fact I was not fully convinced that the man who sat there on a thwart, sobbing like a grieved child, was not a victim of delirium. What he had suffered, possibly for weeks, would have deranged, either temporarily or permanently, many of the strongest minds.

No matter, though, whether the man's reason for grief was imaginary or real, he was to be pitied. Even to men of the calloused conscience of island traders it was a painful task to inform the man of what had happened while he had lain unconscious. But nothing could be gained through delay.

Tom sat down by his side and put his hand on one of the shaking shoulders. The man responded to the gentle touch and stopped his sobbing. As he gazed at Tom there was something in his expression which bespoke returning courage. Only then I noticed that he was well advanced in years.

"Brace yourself, my friend," said Tom. "This will be hard on you, I know, but remember that a quick death is preferable to long suffering among fiends to whom the pain of others is pleasure."

The man shook his head mournfully.

"There is nothing, lad, which could grieve me more than the thought of the lassie in the hands of such devils. I've suffered many days, and so has the girl —of that I'll tell you at another time— but to suffer is a missionary's prerogative. Tell me what you know. I am prepared for anything now."

Then Tom broke the terrible truth. I was glad that he had elected himself the spokesman.

"God forgive you for the deed," the priest said in a deep, sonorous voice, when Tom had finished. "If the lassie perished in the blast it was His will. It was a better death than I had feared. But, lads, do not despair. The guiding hand of Him who has sent you works wonders. The lassie may be safe. Her cage stood well clear of the stone altar. May I be forgiven for calling such a devilish thing an altar."

With the conclusion the priest lapsed into silent prayer.

It took seconds for us to understand that any man could be possessed of such strong faith. But whenever my thoughts approached the possibility of a living white girl being among the creatures above, my blood boiled. Tom's hand dropped from the man's shoulder. He looked up and exchanged glances with Bunk and me.

"I wish we could do something," he said helplessly. "How long do you think it'll be before we can get out of here?"

Bunk glanced at the water at the cave's mouth. A good foot and a half below the surface a dim sheen of moonlight could be seen sifting through the water.

"It'll be more than a couple of hours, maybe three before we can get out," he decided rightly. "If the tide ain't full yet, it will be longer."

MANY things can happen in two or three hours, I thought. Heaven knows, the thatch roof might be ablaze. And here we stood, nearby, but as good as miles away. Meanwhile — meanwhile, might not those devils rally? Then turn their fury against the helpless girl? We had negotiated that tunnel for mere gain. Was it not worth a greater risk to save a life?

It was. At least an attempt should be made.

"Boys," I cried out, furious at myself for having almost given up, trying to amend for faintheartedness with enthusiasm, "let's dive through that tunnel even if all hell is ablaze."

For a moment my shipmates looked at me as if they thought I had gone mad. Then they exchanged questioning glances.

"Why not try?" exclaimed Bunk. "If we find it can't be done, then—" he shrugged his shoulders for want of suggestion in such an eventuality.

I did not give them time to think of hampering possibilities.

"You fellows got your guns, which are dry. Mine got wet, but—" Instead of raising the question I drew my weapon from its soaked holster and, pointing it at the water, pulled the trigger.

The cartridge exploded. The report within that cave was terrific. It startled the missionary so that he jumped to his feet. Bunk seized him for fear that he might stagger and go overboard.

"What was that?" he gasped in alarm.

I pressed the bottle into his hand.

"Don't object now because you're a parson," I advised. "You'll need it, because we're going to leave you alone for awhile and we got to take the light with us. I was just trying my gun because it got wet. We are going through that hole."

The man did not object to taking a drink, although now he was fully aware of what he was doing. But he did object to remaining behind.

"Don't ask me to linger here with the uncertainty of what's happened preying on my mind," he begged. "I'm sound of body and I may be of some help."

"Man, you haven't even a knife on you," retorted Bunk.

But he might as well have tried persuasion on the tide.

"I rely upon a weapon stronger and sharper than those made by man," he said steadfastly, and there was no mistaking what he meant and that his faith could not be shaken. "On my way I shall pray for a clear way, but if you encounter the devils above, a mere glimpse of one they think they've murdered will put them to flight. 'Twas God's wisdom which armed my hand."

Though the tunnel should by now have been a familiar passage to me, I led the way almost as cautiously as if it had just been discovered. There was no telling what changes the explosion might have made. Some pit might have been opened in the floor. Again, there might have been a rock loosened above, ready to drop on us.

But nature had done her work too well. The walls, the floor, the top had withstood the shock without a mark on them. Not until we reached the upward slope did we find evidence of the force of the blast.

Pieces of the powder keg's broken staves, ashes and charred wood were clinging to the walls, held by the sticky lining. One of the birch hoops of the keg had embedded itself so deeply that it hung there like a noose to strangle the first one who should try to pass through.

The farther we advanced into the flue the more our headway was encumbered. The last few yards I was forced to roll a stone ahead of me which required nearly all of my strength to handle. Since there was not room enough for two men to work side by side, I had to work alone. And the stone was fairly hot at that. From its shape I judged it to be one of the low pillars which had upheld the platform.

FEARS of failure began to come. If a boulder like the one I was wrestling with could roll down, where would the slabs of the platform be? Possibly covering the pit, with the manhole wrenched past the rim. Twenty men would have had their work cut out to lift one of the heavy slabs in the open. What could one man, crouching underneath, do?

Then, if everything else had been

hurled upward, how could a person helplessly caged have escaped being crushed?

But I did not abandon hope. I worked my way ahead with almost superhuman strength. The heat, the choking fumes, drawn in with each backdraft, became oppressive. Foot by foot, sometimes only an inch at a heave of my already blistered shoulders, I moved forward. Bunk occasionally helped a little by bracing himself against my feet. All that Tom could do was to shout encouragement. The missionary's droning voice could be heard far in the rear, appealing to the Power above to keep up my strength.

A queer army of demons, storming a hell, indeed!

At last the stubborn boulder fetched up against something solid. Had the obstruction been another stone, even if smaller than the one I had moved for the last thirty or forty feet, we would have been forced to give up. But, with my arm reaching past the thing which had tormented me so, I discovered that the obstruction was the front of the four-foot shelf of the pit.

And the most encouraging thing of all was that a providently prolonged downdraft carried a breath of fresh, cool air in the wake of acrid fumes.

The encouragement doubled my strength. I wedged my hands under the stone. Heaved, and raised it about two inches. With a loud oath which, coming out of that hole, should have frightened any lurking savages into flight, I worked my arm under the burden, called to Bunk to brace hard against my feet, heaved upward while creeping forward and then reaped the reward. The stone rolled from my shoulder on to the flat top of the shelf, and a shower of hot ashes dropped on my head.

Swaying from the last effort like a drunken man, I raised myself to my feet. Danger from arrows or spears was forgotten. All I could think of now was fresh air, and that I drank in breath after breath. I was barely conscious of Bunk's hands shaking me impatiently by the ankles. I just panted for breath and wiped the dust from my eyes. Then I looked up. Above me was the starry, blue sky!

All I heard was the hooting of the draft as it rushed to and fro past my body, the crackling of cinders and a soft hissing like that of steam escaping through a slight leak in a pipe joint.

Nothing stirred about me. But to be ready for an emergency I drew my pistol. At such a critical moment the feel of a weapon is comforting. The moonlight which surrounded me must have given Bunk a glimpse of the gun. He ceased urging me on. I think he realized that I was entitled to at least a few seconds of watching before moving ahead.

Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the queer light given partly by the moon, partly by the glowing embers around the pit. What a sight!

The longer I gazed, the more ghastly things were revealed. One of the large stone slabs had broken in two. A large section of it stood leaning against a post, the only one of the roof supports that remained standing. A smaller piece of stone slab, triangular in shape, stood upright with its point wedged between two large stones. These things I saw at my right.

The thatch roof had completely blown away. Its smoldering remains lay in a heap at my left, glowing like a burned haystack with occasional tongues of flame bursting forth. Whenever the draft came toward me the heat was terrific.

From the glowing heap came the crackling noise. The hissing came from there too. Every second or so the hiss crescendoed to the force of a sputter, like that coming from bacon in a frying pan. I turned my eyes in the direction whence it came. Then, what a nauseating sight I beheld!

Half buried under the glowing mass, with its hideously painted legs hanging sprawled on a stone, lay the body of a savage.

A short distance away, but too far to be a part of the same victim, an arm protruded, scorched to a reddish brown. The hand at the end of that arm was still gripping the shaft of a long bamboo spear.

All but one of the poles which had supported the roof had broken off at their bases and had dropped upon the ground so that they reached radially outward from the scene of devastation. Stones, large and small, had been scattered in all directions among heaps of glowing embers. Here and there among the heaps lay the charred remnants of black skulls, a wisp of smoke curling upward from each, like a last sacrificial offering to the heathen gods to whom the ruined temple had been dedicated. The air was permeated with the acrid odor of burning flesh and bone.

But of a living creature there was not a sign.

IF I HAD not stopped to survey my surroundings, it would have been easier to set foot into the inferno. But now Bunk could restrain his impatience no longer. Of course, he had no idea of the spell I was under.

"For God's sake, what's holding you if there are no blacks around?" he shouted out of the hollow. "Get going, man. Let me get up and get some air. I'm choking, and that preacher's howling his prayers like a lunatic."

Bunk surely had made himself heard. Evidently not to my ears alone. His voice had been the first loud sound which had broken the stillness for some time. It must have carried quite a distance, and coming out of that hollow made it boom like a bass drum.

The border of the bush to the south was a good one hundred and fifty yards away. But Bunk's jumbled words must have carried that far, for from there came something like an answer. Weird wails, piercing shrieks and doleful howls rent the air. The racket lasted but a second, then all was still again. All but the crackling of embers and the hissing and sputtering.

It startled me at first. But it was quite plain that the discordant notes had come from the throats of frightened savages, not from an infuriated horde.

Now, at least, I had some knowledge of where a source of possible danger lay. I bent low so as to bring my face close to the hole in which I stood.

"Bunk," I said, not louder than necessary, "the natives are not far away, but they are scared. When you come up, don't talk loud. Be ready for a nice, pleasant sight. Here I go."

Without another moment's hesitation I leaped up.

But those stones with which the ground had been paved were hot. I could not stand still for a moment, and had to prance about to keep my feet from scorching.

Bunk's head and shoulders appeared above the rim of the pit. He started to rub his eyes, but I gave him no chance to look around. I gripped his shirt collar and made him come up in a hurry. He had no time to look around, for his feet, like mine, were kept busy. Fortunately the force of the explosion had blown everything in the shape of fire away from the pit, but a few feet from the rim one had to watch carefully where to put bare feet.

When Tom joined in on our dancing performance he said:

"If the blacks see us, they must think that the devils out of that hole are getting set up for a real jamboree, the way we're hopping about."

"Hop hearty then," recommended Bunk. "Maybe every scare's as good as a bullet. But where—"

The missionary's panting breath, as he laboriously raised himself upon the stone step, made the question unnecessary. When he straightened up he shuddered.

"It seems impossible, and yet it is true," he mumbled in an awed voice, bowing his head.

I was wondering what his emotions

would be when he realized that once more he was standing where but a short time previously he had stood with such a terrible fate before him, where hope for rescue could hardly have entered his mind. Yet the miracle had happened. He stood there as before, unbound, a living man. His first sentence made me expectant that he would express his emotions in words. But he said no more. His eyes, becoming accustomed to the light, had caught the grinning, smoking skulls which faced him.

He gasped, shrank back so that he nearly stumbled off the shelf. He covered his eyes with his hand.

"Oh, those heathen murderers!" he sobbed, threatening to break down completely. "I dare not look, lads. Tell me what you see. Is—is there—"

He broke off and silently addressed himself to some one in whom he had more faith than in us.

But we had understood. We remembered the cause for our mad dash. Frantically we started to tear away the débris. Whenever we came across a black skull we flung it into the heap of glowing thatch.

But our search proved fruitless. A strong bamboo cage, such as savages build, will not disappear without a trace in so short a time. There was nothing to be found which suggested any part of such a structure. Nor anything that might have been in it.

After minutes of searching we stood staring at each other. The same question was in all our minds. I tore the strong spear from the hand near the thatch heap. Bunk and Tom found other long shafts. With these implements as pokers we attacked the heap.

Bamboo, especially if deprived of sufficient air for combustion, burns slowly. With the moisture of a body within its immediate vicinity it will withstand the heat of burning thatch for hours before it crumbles to ashes. It was less than an hour since we had set off our volcano. But all our poking and stirring revealed nothing that would make us sorry that we had touched off the fuse!

Again we stood facing each other. But this time we did not stare like men suddenly conscious of having been a party in a dastardly crime. Bunk tapped his forehead meaningly.

"Poor fellow," he said in a low voice, nodding toward the priest. "I guess any one of us would have cracked too while in his boots. Just leave him alone for awhile. Let him pray all he wants to; it can't do any harm."

WE FELT a little sheepish. I know I felt so, and I could read it on the other two faces. Heroes embarking upon the knightly errand of saving a heroine from demons, then to find neither demons to face nor a heroine to be saved.

"Boys," I said, "we'll have to keep this wild goose chase under our hats when we get on board, or we'll never hear the end of it."

"Right you are," agreed Bunk. "But how about that sky-pilot? We'll have to take him on board with us."

"If he talks we can't stop him." Tom shrugged. "But, speaking of the ship, I wonder whether we can see her from up here."

"Don't see why we shouldn't," I reasoned. "There's the top of the cliff to the north. Lord! We went some distance underground. Let's see what the place looks like."

From where we stood we could see no distance. In every direction from the center of the large basin in which we were the ground sloped upward to a height of fifteen feet. Northward it rose still higher, possibly to an elevation of twenty-five feet above the level of the pit.

We walked north. Desolate ground it was. No vegetation grew there. Deep crevices, some of them over a foot in width, held no earth for roots to find nutriment.

Then Tom had to say something cheerful:

"Some day this whole damn thing'll

tumble down. Hope it won't do it while we're on it."

"Shut up with that science talk," growled Bunk. "We've been fools enough already."

We reached the rim of the basin. The edge of the cliff was but ten feet away. When we reached it the bay lay beneath us. In the distance, far below, the moonlight revealed the ship riding at her anchor.

"Well, if this isn't like living through something out of the Arabian Nights!" Tom cried at the sight. "You know, I think those fellows who write that kind of stuff got their cue from something just like this."

Bunk, too, seemed to be caught under some spell, but being of a more hilarious nature than Tom, it affected him differently.

"'Twould be the hell of a joke on them blokes on board to have 'em oglin' us up here now, wouldn't it?" He grinned. "I wish it was daylight so they could see us. Maybe they'd think the explosion blew us out of the hole."

"Why not let them know right now?" said Tom, drawing his pistol. "I'll just blaze away at short intervals, and then they will know it."

I had him by the gun arm before he could raise it.

"Save your fire for something to shoot at if it comes," I growled.

My objection, however, was overruled by the majority of two to one.

"Now look here," Bunk sided in with Tom. "There's such a thing as carryin' caution too far. You know as well as we do that the blacks ain't goin' to come out of the bush this night. If you didn't think so you wouldn't have walked away from that hole."

"Yes," added Tom in defense of his proposition, "and I'm sure the skipper saw the explosion when it went off and he's sweating blood, wondering whether we are safe. If he hears about our having been up here and never letting on about it, you'll catch particular hell."

Knowing from previous experience that it was one of Mac's ironclad rules that under no circumstances should even the most unimportant appearing details be ignored, I gave in.

"But we don't want to waste lead which might come in handy," I said. "Let's try to signal to them with the lantern. Somebody will be looking this way sooner or later."

"Good idea," Tom agreed. "Besides letting the ship know that we're up here, the sight of a light dancing jigs in the air will sure make the blacks think that ghosts have broken loose."

We went back to the pit. To our surprise the missionary stood upon the hot ground. Since he had his shoes on he had the advantage over us. He was able to keep his feet still, but his actions certainly convinced us that his mind had been affected.

With one of the poles we had dropped he was raking glowing thatch over the exposed parts of the victims of the explosion.

"Oh, don't bother with them guys, friend," said Bunk impatiently. "Let 'em fry there. They don't deserve no better. You come with us; we're goin' to signal our ship."

RIGHT then we were reminded that we were dealing with a different type of man than we had ever before met throughout our travels. Without desisting from his humane act, the man shook his head mournfully and said:

"Even in my grief, lads, I will not stand for sacrilege against them which have caused it. Even in the body of the benighted heathen there was a soul. You may go ahead with your signaling. It's my duty to administer to the dead."

We did not bother him any more. We lighted our lantern by procuring a flame from the burning thatch, then covered it with one of our shirts.

"Either the fellow's gone balmy," thought Tom aloud while we walked to the cliff, "or—"

"Or what?"

"That girl he's talking about isn't a myth," Tom finished his sentence.

"I don't doubt that she's real," I said. "But she never came to Vanua Lava with him."

"Now don't you be too sure about that," Bunk suddenly surprised me. "You know that queer things have happened around these islands, an' maybe it's the best thing we could have done to get up here so we can let Mac know that there's something queer goin' on."

Again I was overruled.

We carried the shaded lantern to the extreme end of the promontory. A light displayed there surely would attract the attention of somebody on board the ship.

I exposed the light. Held it steady for a full ten seconds, then, with my hand alternately exposing and covering the flame, I blinked a series of dashes and dots, spelling the name *Emma P.* in code.

We waited, watched and listened. No response.

"Try again," suggested Bunk. "Can't expect them to catch on to it so quick. You know they have to get over their surprise."

I did as Bunk had suggested. But this time I did not use any code. I swung the lantern so as to let its path mark the vessel's name in large block letters. And this time we did not have to wait for a response.

But it did not come from the ship. It came from the bush. It came in the shape of the wildest, most dismal shrieks and howls we had heard that night.

As a climax to the many things which had already happened, watching native eyes had surely seen some sort of demon do a war dance in the air.

"Lord!" exulted Bunk. "We got 'em goin' now. Keep it up till your arm gets tired."

I, too, began to enjoy the play. Several times, with but short intermissions, I spelled the vessel's name. Then, once more, I got as far as the second letter M, and something happened which almost caused me to drop the lantern. And the thing happened on board the ship.

A streak of fire rose high into the air. A blinding flash. It was a rocket.

And now the bush went mad with terror. The ghost ship which had appeared at the time when the demons of the underworld were clamoring for appeasement stood in league with those demons!

But this time the shrieks did not subside as suddenly as they had done before. The clamor kept up until it gradually assumed a muffled note as if the horde had been smothered under an immense blanket.

"Well, of all the humbug I've ever witnessed on any island," chuckled Bunk, "this is the worst. The way it sounded to me, that last trump drove all the niggers into their huts to stay there till starvation drives them out. What now, lads?"

There was a question an answer to which I had not given any thought.

"Boys," I said, suddenly sobering, "now we got the whole ship in a commotion. Mac will be expecting something from us now, but what?"

"We'll have to get back on board as quick as we can," suggested Tom. "How long will it be before we can get out of that cave?"

"Oh, at least an hour and a half."

"Hell!" ejaculated Bunk. "That won't do. We'll have to make a move sooner than that. Think we can find a way down to the beach? If we can get there it'll be all right to hail the ship. Leave the gig in the cave till mornin'."

I considered the possibility for a minute. Then, without considering the dangers which such an undertaking might involve:

"There won't be any harm in trying. Well, anyhow, let's get back to the hole and tell that poor devil of a sky pilot that something's under way. Lord knows what it is, though."

"Yes, and keep as close to the edge of the cliff as possible," advised Bunk.

"Don't let the ship lose sight of the lantern now."

We had covered but half the distance to the pit when Tom suddenly seized my arm.

"Look!" he said, pointing to the ship. "What does that mean?"

I stopped to look. Dots and dashes were being flashed without mistake.

"Boats are being launched; stand by," I read aloud. I signaled back, "I understand."

"Now, boys, we will *have* to make the beach no matter what's in the way."

"An' I kinda feel it in my bones, as Mac would say, that we're in for a lot o' fun an' no breakfast in the mornin'!" was Bunk's prediction.

We ran to the pit like wild men. Only a dull glow could be seen where the heap of thatch lay.

But of the missionary there was neither hide nor hair!

CHAPTER X

IN THE BUSH

WE WERE stunned. It seemed as if we were being made victims of some cruel joke. But this was a poor place for jokers.

"Now I wonder," said Tom.

Bunk said nothing. He got down on hands and knees, put his head as close to the opening as he could and shouted into the tunnel. Three times he repeated the call, but only the echo of his voice came back.

"Say," said Tom apprehensively. "Do you think the blacks could—?"

"Rats!" Bunk threw any such suggestion aside. "You couldn't get one of those natives near this spot again. It looks more like—"

"That he's gone after the blacks?" I broke in scornfully. "If he did he's the biggest fool I ever heard of."

"Or there's somebody he thinks more of than himself," added Tom. "I wish we had some help."

"Come on, let's go after it," I decided quickly. "The sooner I can get in touch with Mac the better I like it. If we can find our way, the natives won't bother us. They're out of the way for the night."

Some thirty yards east of the high ground, surrounding the bowl shaped hollow, the land end of the promontory sloped downward toward an impregnable appearing cane brake and thicket. That was the direction in which lay the river gorge. Beyond the gorge was more thicket, crowding close to the edge of the vertical cliff at the foot of which was the beach.

To follow the bare slope close to the edge of the cliff was our only alternative. Thus our lantern was kept within sight of the ship. What course to take after reaching the gorge we had to leave to chance.

About a quarter of a mile we scampered over loose stones and bare ground. The border of the jungle at our right drew closer and closer toward the edge as we advanced. When we reached the gorge there was not more than a ten-foot space between the vertical drop of almost a hundred feet and a thicket which looked as if nothing bigger than a mouse had ever invaded it.

And that thicket crowded to the very edge of the chasm so that the overhanging branches cast shadows upon the glossy surface of the river far below.

No man had ever reached the beach by that road. Nothing could have gained a foothold on that sheer wall, and heaven only knew where there might be a path in the jungle.

Bunk got down on hands and knees and gazed down at the river. Then he lay down flat upon his stomach, let his head hang over as low as possible and peered along the top.

"A little distance inland from here," he exclaimed, pointing upstream, "there's somethin' hanging across this break. I've an idea it's a bridge."

"You're crazy," scoffed Tom. "These natives haven't got brains enough to build bridges."

Nevertheless he dropped to satisfy his own eyes, and then he became quite excited.

"Bunk, I'll take it back," he said. "That *is* a bridge, built just like a hammock."

I got down too. There was no question about it. Not more than twenty yards upstream from where we were there was one of those ingeniously constructed hanging bridges of bamboo and twisted rattan spanning the cleft in the rock. And where there was a bridge there was certain to be a path leading to it.

We drew our bush knives and attacked the tangled growth which blocked our way. Yard after yard we hacked a narrow passage through a maze so thickly intertwined that it appeared like the work of basket weavers.

What an eery place, such primitive jungle which neither civilized man nor savage had ever trodden. So thick it was that not a moonbeam pierced the foliage. The light of our lantern startled all sorts of creeping things which made their presence known through uncanny rustling of leaves. Slimy leeches dropped upon our hands and arms. Lizards as long as a man's hand croaked their protesting "pock-yooo" and were hopping about like fleas on a scratching dog. It surely was pioneering. The only consolation one had was in the feeling of security against being attacked by creatures of formidable size.

HOWEVER there soon came an end. Either the bush was not as deep as we had thought or we had made rapid progress. When it looked as if we were still in the midst of the growth our blades hacked through, into an open space as suddenly as if we had cut our way through a garden hedge. We stepped out upon a narrow, well trodden path which was flanked on both sides by the thicket.

And not more than a dozen feet to the left of our improvised gateway we saw the bridge which spanned the chasm!

Narrow it was, that bridge. Just wide enough for one man to pass comfortably between its suspension cables. These cables also answered the purpose of guard rails. But when it came to the inspection of the workmanship of that bridge, I could not suppress an exclamation of surprise.

Let those who are familiar with the great Brooklyn Bridge imagine that structure in miniature, about fifty feet from tower to tower; let them imagine nature's towers, trees, in the place of the stone pillars; let them imagine twisted and woven rattan as the material for the cables; bamboo strips interlaced with binders made of thin strands of split rattan replacing the planking and the tracks, and they will see that bridge which we crossed that night on an island inhabited by men living in the stone age.

Despite their superstitions those savages had their engineers. And this was long before the Brooklyn Bridge was built.

Of course we had to cross in single file. One at a time while the others waited was all we cared to risk, for heaven knew what sort of squirming creatures might have inhabited the dark water of the river below. But, although it swayed and vibrated under our feet, the bridge was strong.

Now we came upon a well defined path, about three feet wide, leading through the cane brakes to the east. It was a ghostly passage by moonlight. Only fools would tread such a road without apprehension. On both sides, not many inches from our shoulders, were the stalks, considerably higher than our heads. Some stood straight, some leaned, others curved and twisted in every direction. Eyes can not pierce such a tangle for more than two or three inches. Weird rustlings not far from our feet we heard aplenty at every cautious step.

And then—especially if one has trodden such paths before—one's mind is continually picturing pits, ingeniously

hidden under slender twigs and leaves, bristling with needle pointed bamboo stakes.

Crouching low, reaching ahead with our long bush knives, stabbing at the ground at every step, we advanced. Straight to the east for three hundred yards. Then we came to an abrupt bend to the right.

Here some curious instinct warned us of danger. None of us spoke a word, but by the looks my shipmates gave me I judged that we were all of the same mind. Within a radius of not many yards from where we stood there was something wrong.

By the stars we could tell that the bay and the beach must be at our left. If this were a path to the beach—and there must have been one—why did it take a sudden turn toward the mountains?

We redoubled our caution. Every inch of ground was tested before sliding one foot ahead of the other and putting any weight on it. Thus we rounded the bend.

One hundred feet toward the mountain we proceeded without mishap, then the path ended. It seemed to have been a blind.

In front of us, the same as at our sides, was the wall of stalks.

"Now what?" demanded Tom. "After all this trouble we find that the blacks have made fools of us. We'll have to cut our way through to the beach."

"Not through that stuff," I protested. "I know of certain islands where they let the cane brakes grow right over the pitfalls and in such places you find them good and thick, too. What good would the risk do us anyway? We're not far enough to the east to be near the lowlands. We'd only reach the top of the cliff where it'd be too high to jump off."

"But, hell, man," argued Tom. "Why not try cutting our way to the east? Pitfalls, rats! You didn't hesitate a moment cutting your way through the bush."

"Ah, that's different. That stuff we cut through didn't grow there in a week. I know this cane. A couple of days will destroy any track that a fellow can leave."

Bunk was examining the ground carefully.

"You're right about that, matey," he agreed with me. Pointing down, he added, "But this path has been used today. You can see fresh tracks all over."

Savagely he stabbed at the stalks which were blocking our way. Suddenly he gave an exclamation of surprise.

"This stuff ain't growin' here!" he announced. "The stalks are swingin' at the bottom an' stay steady at the top. The stuff's made like a mat, hung down from the tops of poles covered by them reeds. Look!"

HE TOOK his blade under his arm. His hands spread the stalks which, against the nature of all things growing in the soil, separated at the bottom and remained in place at the top.

Concealed in the thick growth on each side of the path was a stout wooden pole. At a height of a few inches above a tall man's head cords were strung from pole to pole and to these cords the hanging stalks were fastened. Eight such screens placed within two or three inches of each other made the decoy look as natural as the growth on both sides.

"Caught on to your tricks all right, you devils!" chortled Bunk as he reached through and spread the stalks wide apart.

Through the opening we could see a path like the one we stood in.

"Fool niggers," grumbled Tom after we had crept through and stood looking at the screen from the other side. "The damn thing didn't stop us but a second. Anybody'd catch on to the thing if he'd want to find his way bad enough."

Bunk seized him by the arm and pointed up and down the path we had emerged upon. This path ran east and west, parallel to the one which we had followed after crossing the bridge.

"Fool niggers, did you say, Tom?" Bunk admonished. "Well, I'd call it a pretty good trick. Now look: Supposin' you came along this path an' you didn't know where to duck under the contraption. Supposin' you was some greenhorn who didn't even know it was there, what's it look like to you, eh? Why, man, you'd keep on walkin' straight ahead because this looks like a straight road to you, an' chances are that you'd wind up in some pitfall farther on. Those blacks don't go to so much trouble for nothin'. You can hardly see the thing now, while you know where it is. Smart boys I call them."

"Smart, eh?" scoffed Tom, raising his bush knife to cut down a stalk. "Well, I'll show them that we're not so dumb. I'll stick a marker in there so we'll know where to turn in when we come back."

Bunk restrained him.

"No good, boy. I wouldn't trust that marker of yours. These things have to be renewed often to keep them lookin' natural. How do you know that there mightn't be a fellow here before we come back? He'd sure change your marker to lead you into a trap. Never be sure of anything when you're in the bush."

Tom had a lot to learn about traveling in the unexplored jungle.

"All right, have it your way," he submitted. "But I'll bet you a quid I'll lead you right up to it if we come back this way."

Two hundred yards eastward we traveled, feeling more secure at every step. Now the ground began to slope down. Our path swung in a long curve to the north. We were coming nearer to the bay.

The cane brakes gave way to mangroves. Branches were arching over our heads so we could barely see the sky. A few more steps and the path lost itself among straggling bushes, and here and there a beam of moonlight reflected from the surface of the bay could be seen through the foliage. We were about to spread the last of the branches, ready to step into the open. Then—

"Easy there in the bush!"

It had come so suddenly that we drew back and stood motionless. Through the branches we saw the silhouettes of twenty men with rifles at hips, bush knives at sides.

ONLY for a second did the shock last. Then we realized that we were face to face with our own shipmates who had landed while we were on our way down.

"It's all right, Skipper, it's us," I shouted through the branches.

Then another shock held me back.

"Yeah? Suppose you others let me hear your voices too," came Mac's voice. He surely was on the alert. "Nothin' 's all right round here. We got you covered. No monkey business now."

"Skipper's gone crazy too," I grunted.

Bunk and Tom relieved the strain.

"Your own crew, man!" they shouted. "Who the—"

"That's better. Step out and show your ugly mugs."

We emerged upon the white sand, puzzled as much by the reception as by anything we had met with that night.

"Well, you came near gettin' plugged so full of lead that the blacks'd died of lead poison if they'd eaten you later," chuckled Mac. "Why didn't you come back the way you went? We been waitin' an' lookin' for you to come out of the cave. Where's the boat, an' what's all the row about? What did you want to risk your hides up there for anyway?"

The men had crowded around us and questions were fired so quickly that we would have been kept busy explaining for at least an hour. First, however, I had a question of my own to ask.

"Wait a minute. Just go easy for awhile." I shook them off. "What was the joke about filling us full of lead? Did you think that there're natives here who can speak to you in plain English?"

"We weren't worryin' about the natives," retorted Kennedy. "Who'd worry about them after the spitfire mountain you fellows sent off? But who the devil

would have expected *you* fellows up there after that?"

"But who'd you think had sent a white man's signal?"

"Yeah, who! We've been talkin' things over about that schooner. You never can be too sure about such things. Van Asvelt has a schooner besides the *Tinacula*, an' it wouldn't be at all impossible that he might have sent her here to follow up. She might have got wrecked an' her crew'd be on the island, somehow managin' to steer clear of the blacks. That's the only explanation we could find for white men to be up there. Naturally they'd try to get a ship to get away with."

"You think the blacks would have let them run round loose after cuttin' off their schooner?' demanded Bunk. "Better think once more an make a better job of it."

Saying this, he nudged me with his elbow.

"I didn't say anything about her bein' cut off," retorted Kennedy. "She might have caught fire from the galley stove or some other way. I've known things like that to happen. Why are you so sure about her bein' cut off?"

This was beginning to be good. The longer I could delay the truth the nearer we would come to moving by daylight if Mac should decide to invade the bush right away. Bunk nudged me again.

"Why are we so sure about her being cut off?" I stalled a little more. "Well, don't you think that a fellow who made the trip here on her ought to know?"

I think we were getting a little on Mac's nerve.

"Now that'll be about enough of that," he growled. "Just because you fellows did a good job gives you no license to upset the whole ship's routine. If it wasn't that your skull's too damn thick to hurt I'd say the powder keg must have hit you in the head. If there's somebody left from that schooner—oh, hell, what's the sense in even askin' such a fool question as I had in my mind."

Tom threw up his hands. He planted himself close in front of Mac.

"Now, look here, Captain," he said in a sober voice. "I don't know you well enough to take it in my head to start joking with you. But I'll tell you right now—and I'm sober and in my right senses—we *did* find a man who came here with that schooner, and he wasn't one of Van Asvelt's blacklegs either. He's a missionary, if you please. And, more than that, if that missionary's mind isn't wandering, there's a woman too. Now believe it or not."

KENNEDY put his rifle under his arm and pocketed his hands.

"Well," he snorted with disgust, strutting up and down a few paces, "it's either me or somebody else. This dealin' with fanatics all your life is unbalancin' people."

"It ain't been unbalancin' any of us, though," Bunk suddenly flared up. "I know what you fellows think. Just because we didn't bring that sky pilot along on a stretcher you think we're yarnin'. Anybody'd think you're a bunch of landsmen."

Now the men were getting impatient of this squabble. One of them pressed forward and confronted Mac.

"Look here, Skipper," he said. "They ain't none of us made any kicks yet about gettin' dragged ashore in the middle of the night, but we'd like to know how long it'll be afore this thing's gonna be settled. If there's a sky pilot 'mongst them niggers what you gonna do, let him fry?"

He swung around at me.

"Is this a joke or—"

"It is no joke," I flared at the man. "If the quarterdeck hasn't got any sense, I hope the focsle has, anyway. The man is a Catholic priest by the name of Father Delaney. Whether his mind is wandering about his niece or not I don't know."

Now arose a chorus of growls among the men.

"Well, I'm a Catholic," one of them

made himself heard, "an' I ain't gonna stand fer them cannibal blacks burnin' no priest."

"Me neither," came several voices.

"But, men," protested Mac, half undecided. "The thing that looks so fishy to me is that the man should have remained behind. No sane man would do that after bein' rescued. He'd stick to the fellows who pulled him out of it.

Bunk was mad. Driving his bush knife into the sand, he shouted angrily:

"For heaven's sake, is that goin' to be started all over again? An' here you, yourself, thought that there might be some survivors of that schooner on the island!"

"That's different," retorted Mac. "That crew of Van Asvelt's is the devil's own. They'd survive anything. An' I know that they always carry a couple of Malaita cutthroats who'd find their way through any bush. But your story sounded a little too fishy. Yarnin' about a missionary an' then not able to produce him."

"Mebbe he went to look after the girl," said one of the men. "No priest's gonna tell no lie, an' goin' after her is just what he'd do. Skipper, them there blokes didn't crawl down here through the bush fer the fun of it."

Mac studied the men for a few seconds in frank wonder.

"Well," he said at last, "if you fellows are willin' to rush the bush on a thin yarn like that, don't blame me afterward if things go wrong. But for the life of me I'm yet half under the impression that there's some white renegades stowed away among the natives who'd try to pull us into a trap."

To this Kennedy added, addressing himself particularly to me:

"Yes, there's something funny about the whole affair. I know how you fellows feel about it after what you've seen; maybe I'd feel the same; but you know that the findin' of a renegade white among some of the most savage natives is nothin' new."

"Yeah," Bunk said scornfully, "all they got to do is to burn their schooner an' introduce themselves to the chief. The rest is easy. Just step on the altar an' tell the niggers to light the fire. That'll sure pull a trap for somebody."

At this Mac swore until the air was blue.

"You mean to say that you saw the white man you're ravin' about on that contraption with your own eyes? Now I'm sure that there's somethin' wrong about the whole affair, an' I'm just fool enough to go ahead and find out what it is. If nothin' else comes out of it there's the possibility of nabbin' a couple of the devil doctors before they get over their scare."

That sounded as if Mac was partly convinced that we had not been totally deceived. Of course, after I had had time to weigh the various possibilities in my mind more carefully, I did not blame Mac and Kennedy for being suspicious. But possibly the way the facts were brought out was for the best after all. Had we started relating our tale as it should have been told it might have been accepted as so wild a yarn that we would have been bundled back on board before finishing.

I headed straight for one of the four beached whaleboats in which the party had landed.

"Where you goin'?" demanded Mac.

"We are going up there by way of the cave," I came back. "That's the easiest way."

"You are not!" protested Mac. "By the looks of you three, I'd want a hundred chimney sweeps to go ahead of me. It'll soon be daylight and you fellows will be able to find your way the way you came. The open air is good enough for me."

Closer scrutiny of Bunk, Tom and me convinced the men that Mac's proposition was better.

The east was turning gray when we started.

"Careful, Tom!" warned Bunk as we rounded the curve where the path led us up the hill.

"Careful be damned," scoffed Tom, rushing ahead. "I'm going to win that quid from you. I can tell by my steps how far we'll have to go before we turn into that side road."

Tom held his lead by two or three yards.

"You're takin' different steps than before, man," said Bunk.

"Easy ahead there!" came Mac's voice close behind me. "We ain't a lot of school boys on an outin'."

Tom paid no attention.

"I'm going to win—"

The rest of his boast was drowned by a cracking of twigs as he threw himself backward with a cry of alarm and surprise.

"Good Lord. I knew it the second before it happened!" croaked Mac.

CHAPTER XI

BIG FELLA TALK

EVEN before the first cracking of the twigs reached my ears I felt the chill. Tom's hands clutching at the air above him, his body seemingly growing shorter and his cry, all came at once. Under the spell of the sight and sound I impulsively checked myself where I stood and was almost bowled over by Mac as he bumped into me. I saw Bunk throw himself flat on his stomach. As he dropped his arms shot forward. The next moment I saw his left forearm with a strangle hold under Tom's chin. His right hand was clutching at a shoulder. Nothing but his head and one shoulder could be seen of Tom.

At Bunk's mad yell, "Lend a hand here!" Mac, Kennedy and I rushed forward and plunged our hands through the covering leaves and twigs. We lay piled on top of Bunk, caught hold of Tom wherever we could.

"Oh, Lord! Something's gone right through my leg," groaned Tom as we dragged him out of the pit.

Heedless of his injury, which was as yet concealed from us, we raised him up. For a moment I caught a glimpse of a black hole which instantly closed from below as if a trapdoor had been snapped shut by steel springs.

"A spring mantrap," snarled Mac as his eyes beheld the apparently harmless ground where the hole had been. "Boys, we got the most devilishly ingenious niggers in the world to deal with. Get some dry leaves and set the damn thing on fire, some of you."

Kennedy was bending over Tom.

"Bad enough as it is," he mumbled, carefully withdrawing a needle pointed strip of bamboo which had pierced the thigh so that its sharp point protruded three inches. "Lord, man, you were lucky that you didn't go headlong when you fell."

"I got enough as it is," groaned Tom. "You fellows better get back on board and let the crazy missionary go the way he wanted."

"Not on your life, after this," snapped Mac, his face hardening with a set purpose. "We got somethin' to settle with them now. Here, Kennedy," he rapped, tearing one half of his shirt away. "Bandage his leg up tight, an' two of you fellows take Tom back on board. But be careful where you step. You can see now that it doesn't pay to know too much around here."

Two of the men had chopped the cover from the pit with their bush knives. They could reach only four feet beyond the edge, but the pit extended farther than we could see under the remaining covering. If a body of men had rushed along that path, possibly a dozen would have met their death on the sharp stakes which bristled at the bottom, reaching to within four feet of the surface.

The pit itself must have been seven or eight feet deep. It did not take the men more than a minute to half fill it with dry leaves and transform it into a roaring furnace.

When the light covering crumbled under the flames, Bunk and I saw how

near death we had been when we had traveled that road during the night. Less than a foot from the bare edge was the decoy curtain of hanging stalks. And now, while it was almost broad daylight, one had to look close to discover the decoy.

Any unsuspecting wayfarer, encouraged through having found the road safe as far as that, seeing it lead on straight ahead, surely would have fallen into the trap.

Furious over the mishap, the men slashed the decoy curtain down. I insisted upon taking the lead and warned the others to stay where they were until I had thoroughly examined the ground for any of the marks our bush knives might have left. There was such a chance that there might have been more than one of the decoys, and if we should have blundered on to the wrong road the constant danger of pitfalls would be before us.

After a careful search Bunk thought that he recognized a place where he had dug into the ground with his blade. Only then did we feel reasonably sure, yet we advanced slowly.

"Do you think that those stakes in that pit might have been poisoned," I voiced my apprehension when the bridge came into sight.

"That's exactly what I've been thinkin' of," replied Mac. "But I doubt it. You see we just got through the monsoons an' with all that rain those pits must have been full of water most of the time. Anyway, I left Cockney in charge on board. He's had experience. He'll know just what to do, an' Tom's a good healthy fellow who'll pull through all right."

Mac caught sight of the bridge, pointed suspiciously at it.

"Is that hurrah's nest* of junk hangin' across the same river we saw from the ship? Do we have to cross on the thing?"

"We did on our way down to the beach," I said.

*A sailor's term for tangled cordage.

BUT now daylight revealed clusters of overhanging bushes farther upriver which might easily have hidden a second, similar structure. After Tom's accident I was not to be caught off my guard again.

"You fellows better wait awhile, till I come back," I advised, then started to cross cautiously, testing the strength and resiliency of the structure by vibrating it at every step.

I must admit that my heart was in my feet during the experiment. Looking down at the river, I could see its banks fairly alive with everything one could expect to find crawling amid the dank vegetation lining the water's edge of a wild stream in the tropics.

But the swaying, creaking structure held.

On the other side the narrow path led straight westward, losing itself in the darkness of the jungle. Everything looked different by daylight. Even the jungle on either side appeared more impregnable now.

Again testing the ground foot by foot, I went forward. Bunk had crossed too. He stood guard at the head of the bridge, gun in hand.

"Matey," he said, never relaxing his vigilance for an instant, "I wish some of those fellows who write about jungle travels could see you pokin' around now. If you was a hero in one of their stories you'd be dashin' ahead there like Alexander."

"And wind up in the stew pit," I said. "Bunk, we may live to tell about this thing some years from now."

"Yeah, an' who will believe us?"

But after all, my caution had been unnecessary. Ten or twelve feet from the bridge was the path we had cut through the thicket. I stood up with a load off my heart.

"All right, Bunk, tell the heroes to dash forward. But make sure that there's not more than one at a time on the bridge."

I think not many of the boys felt like

heroes when they found themselves among the leeches and lizards.

"It's enough to make a fellow swear off the stuff for the rest of his life." Kennedy shuddered. "You fellows had your nerve goin'—"

The exclamation I made checked further words of comment on our nerve. One of the most horrible creatures I cared to encounter in the bushes was staring me in the face. A monstrous spider with a red and yellow body about the size of a silver dollar had decided that the two-foot passage just fitted the desired span of his web. When I slashed at the thing with my bush knife it seemed that the threads offered enough resistance to enable them to snare a bird as big as a sparrow. One bite of that creature would have been fatal and it acted as if it was about to spring at me when I struck out.

When we stood at the brink of the cliff, viewing the bay and the distant ship in the early morning sun, picking leeches off our arms, necks and feet, there was considerable joking passed from mouth to mouth. But it was easy to detect that these jokes were not inspired by real mirth.

By daylight the desolate landscape looked like a rock strewn desert. We descended to the site of the devastated temple. Large war drums made of hollow logs lay abandoned among boulders. Where the thatch had glowed during the night was a heap of gray ashes with a few wisps of smoke ascending. The section of stone slab which had leaned against the standing post had toppled over. Most likely glowing embers near the base of the supporting post had weakened it so that it broke. The only thing that remained standing was the triangular piece of stone, the point of which had been driven into a crevice in the rock.

"You fellows sure raised hell around here," speculated Mac, thoughtfully scratching his head. "Now, before we get mixed up too much, just give me some sort of a picture of what this damn thing really looked like. For the life of me I can't get it through my head."

With a piece of charred wood as a pencil I drew a large sketch of the temple and altar on the flat, upright stone. The men watched my progress with all sorts of jocular comments.

"So that's what the thing looked like, eh?" commented Mac, admiring my work of art with a chuckle. "An' that stone there in that hole—" he pointed at the shelf in the pit—"was where you found that fellow standin' right in the flames? Say—!"

The smiles which he and Kennedy exchanged carried more meaning than any words he might have added.

"Not in the flames," I exploded hotly. "The blacks were just about to light the fire."

"Yeah, just in the nick of time. How many bottles of booze did you fellows have with you?"

Bunk saved me the trouble of thinking up an appropriate retort. He was standing at the rim of the pit.

"Now you just come over here, will you?" he enjoined, pointing into the hole. "If this ain't goin' to convince you, nothin' will."

WITHIN a second everybody was crowding around the pit. There were no more smiles of incredulity. In fact, the faces which glanced at each other were more than serious.

Clearly defined in the black deposit on the stone step within the pit were the imprints of the heels and soles of shoes!

Mac and Kennedy faced about without a word and walked away a few steps. The men thumped their rifle butts upon the ground and stared aghast at Bunk and me.

"We blokes knowed all the time you blokes wasn't yarnin'," one of them said.

Mac and Kennedy swung around and faced us. The tan of their faces seemed to have faded to a lighter hue. There were no grins directed at us.

"But where can the man have gone to?" Kennedy asked the question more of the sky than of any one in particular.

"The only thing I can think of is that he went into the bush," suggested Bunk.

Mac threw his hands up in a gesture of surrender.

"If that's your opinion, Bunk, then it's mine. Yes, an' I'll go even farther. I believe that he's a missionary an' that what he told you about a girl bein' with him is true. I'm ready to believe anything, now."

For a minute the whole assembly stood staring in apparent stupefaction. Gradually the confusion of the senses cleared enough to make practical thought possible.

Kennedy pointed to the south. He said—

"When you heard the blacks howl, did it sound to you as if it came from those bushes?"

"Just about," I replied. "But, of course, you couldn't tell how far back it might have been. You know how funny a lot of voices will sound when coming out of the jungle."

"Yes, yes, I know what you mean," concluded Mac. "Kind of all mixed up, with an echo. Well, let's go up that way on higher ground an' see if we can't make them howl again. If they ain't too far away we'll scare 'em into a fit."

On the higher ground Kennedy started to unroll a canvas package which he had carried slung over his shoulders.

"Holy Moses!" I cried out. "Didn't you think of that stuff when you flopped down to help Tom? It's a wonder you didn't blow the lot of us to hell."

Kennedy grinned wryly.

"Yeah, I thought of it too, after I flopped. Damn little good it would have been then if I hadn't packed the stuff good an' soft."

The package contained twenty-four sticks of dynamite. "Big fella talk" we used to call these sticks. They went ashore with every landing party if there was the least doubt about the attitude of the natives.

Not far from the boundary of the bush was a pile of stones. These stones were nearly of uniform size, about as big as a duck's egg. Likely some sort of ammunition.

"I can only guess what that heap is for," said Kennedy, when he raised a stick of dynamite for a throw. "But those blacks were very obligin' when they dumped it there. It'll just make things a little more interestin'. Now watch—"

He let fly. The detonation shook the ground under our feet. It was answered by a hundredfold echo. Like a broadside from a sloop of war the rocks exploded into the bush!

"IF THAT doesn't start them up it's a sign that it'll be safe to rush the bush," opined Mac. "But since it's broad daylight I'm sure some devil priest will dare to sneak out to have a look or lose his reputation in the tribe."

Kennedy took another stick of dynamite from his package. He ran toward a large war drum which lay but thirty feet from the border of the bush.

"If they come to take a look, I'll give them somethin' worth lookin' at," he said.

He placed the explosive in the hollow of the drum and returned.

"Now, Bunk, that'll be an easy shot for you," he said. "If any of them come out an' they act funny I'll make a magic sign at that drum. That'll be your cue to plant a bullet in the candle."

"Good idea," approved Mac.

But meanwhile something had started. First we heard just one piercing shriek. It could not have been very far away. Within a second a medley of yelling voices answered and then it sounded as if a whole village had been awakened and its inhabitants driven from their huts in alarm.

More and more confused the bedlam grew. Then, at times, individual, high pitched cries could be discerned above the din. At last the noise appeared to

split. Partly it sounded as if it disappeared in the distance, partly as if it were drawing nearer.

"Some sort of habitation back there, all right," commented Mac. "Most of that crowd got so scared that they're takin' to the deeper woods. Maybe the devil doctors are on their way to find out what the row's about."

"Keep your guns at ease, boys," shouted Kennedy when he saw several rifles raised ready to fire. "They won't dare to attack. Just act as if you ain't worryin' about them at all. They're comin' this way sure enough."

We waited, all eyes fixed on the bush. The yells drew nearer. A few more seconds and branches began to stir. A moment later the bush poured forth the worst array of human apes the earth could offer!

Like large black ants, scurrying aimlessly about when their heap is being disturbed by a stick, they broke from cover, none of them seemingly knowing what to do. Some leaped ahead two or three paces, stopped and retreated. Others raced up and down close to the jungle's border, shaking spears and bows over their bushy heads, bleating like frightened sheep caught between two fires. Some stopped short after emerging, breathing hard through inflated nostrils over bone bodkins which pierced the bridges of their flat noses. Their mouths were gaping open, exposing rows of glittering, pointed teeth. The whites of their eyes glaring at us in ominous expectation.

More and more poured forth, the ones which had been tardy in coming into the open bowling over some of the first arrivals. These then struggled to get up, shrieking and howling. It was plain that not one of the natives had come into the open of his own volition.

At last, when there must have been a good hundred in the mass, every unit of which seemed to struggle to be in the rear, the force which must have propelled them appeared.

And that force, now showing itself in animated form, certainly had the appearance of being able to drive such a frantic mob to reckless exposure to danger! As if that study in somber black needed a touch of color, the driving force, in the shape of gaudily painted bodies, wormed its way into the front rank.

The devil doctors, a dozen of them, had appeared upon the scene. They crowded into the front rank because before them was an enemy upon whom the weapons of warriors could inflict no wounds. Only magic would prove effective against such an enemy. And to do their best at magic they were well equipped. And dressed, too, if paint and head regalia could be considered as raiment. For all the savages who faced us were stark naked.

THESE devil doctors gave us all the opportunity we could wish for to note their importance. They did not hesitate to let us know that they were on to our trick of base deception. That they were fully aware of our being devils who had the audacity to present themselves in almost human form.

And they told us in plain sign language and words which any demon should have taken seriously that the only chance we had of escaping the spell of their magic would be a hasty retreat whence we came.

No doubt, one of these painted creatures was the "too much big fella chief," a Napoleon of all the tribes of which there was a representation present. His bushy hair was filled with all manner of repulsive relics. There were bleached rib bones; human, no doubt; crocodile claws; sun dried lizards and snake heads, and many other varieties of decoration which could not be catalogued because he did not hold his head steady enough.

He was no pauper, for he displayed abundant jewelry. Loop upon loop of cord, strung with pieces of bone and shark teeth, hung around his neck. Pendants of the same kind of junk were

suspended from his ears. Bands of a similar display of wealth encircled his ankles.

At every move he made he rattled like a giant dry gourd.

The artist who had painted him up—likely for the fête of the full moon—was good.

All the way down his body, clear to the hips, were crossbars representing ribs, alternately in red and white. Along the arms and legs ran broad white stripes closely resembling the bones of the respective limbs. In a crude way the whole design was supposed to represent a skeleton, the red stripes between the white ribs evidently symbolizing blood. The face was smeared up with white, the nose being outlined with a red triangle, and red rings, like the rims of goggles, circled his eyes.

His armament consisted of a complete mummified human arm and hand. He waved the ghastly thing at us with such vigor that I expected at any moment it would break in two at the elbow joint.

I have good cause to remember this fellow because his attentions seemed to be directed particularly at me. I think the reason why I was the recipient of such distinguished honors was because my hair was somewhat reddish. A red headed devil, of course, was considered more dangerous than others.

If I felt flattered then, he gave me more reason to feel flattered later on.

The others of my friend's kind must have been of an inferior rank. Their headgears were a few inches less in bulk, also slightly wanting in variety. Their jewelry and paintings, too, were of an inferior grade and not quite so lavish. But what they lacked in ostentatious display of decoration they made up in noise.

Five of them tried their best to burst their lungs by blowing horns made of bamboo pipes about two feet long, each horn being tipped with a bell piece fashioned from a skull. The blasts of these horns should have frightened all the devils in creation.

The implements the others wielded were at first hard to discern because they did not hold them steady enough for minute inspection. However, later we discovered that they were sticks from the ends of which dried squids were suspended by cords. These things were something like cat-o'-nine-tails, a squid forming the knout at the end of each string.

Their meaning puzzled me for weeks thereafter. But later, when we had natives working for us as divers, and these divers had learned some broken words of our language, one of them enlightened me about what efficacious devil scarers these dried, dead squids really were. However, about that I will speak in its proper turn.

Behind the front line performers, high above their heads, spears, bows and clubs were being shaken. But not one spear or arrow was pointed at the audience.

We stood there with our ears and eyes being tortured for about three minutes. Then:

"About time that we throw bouquets an' applaud," shouted Mac above the din. "Or would you rather attend grand opera a little longer?"

"Oh, let them have their fun a little longer," said Kennedy. "The longer they keep on tryin' to scare us the more they'll realize that it's hopeless."

The devil doctors must have noticed the grins on the faces of their audience. Apparently they felt highly insulted. They stopped their racket and looked at each other as much as to say—

"Now what do you think of that for obstinacy!"

That was the cue for the men in the rear ranks to speak their lines. They thrust their faces forward and started jabbering in a most unholy babel. What they told us must have meant something like this:

"Now you fellows know yourselves that you are devils, and we know that you're scared blue. Now if you'll be reasonable devils and crawl back into

your hole we'll see to it that you'll be fed a double ration the next time you howl for food."

Words to that effect they must have spoken. Their voices had not come in angry denunciation. They had come rather earnestly, like the voices of men who make a promise and mean every word they say. At the same time they repeatedly pointed their fingers in the direction of the pit which was hidden behind our backs.

"We ain't goin' to do it, you lumps o' coal," said Kennedy. "Now, Bunk, when I raise my hand an' they're all lookin' up to see what I'm after, let fly."

Kennedy's hand went up. He made a motion as if he was catching something invisible out of the air. Every black or painted face was elevated. What could that devil be catching?

He caught an invisible thunderbolt and hurled it!

The report of Bunk's gun blended with the detonation of the cartridge in the war drum. Splinters, large and small, earth and stones, scattered in every direction. The deception was timed so well that the detonation seemed to be caused by the invisible something which Kennedy hurled when his hand struck downward.

Most of the natives went down in a squirming heap with the gaudy front line on top. Surprise more than the shock had knocked them over. Those who did not fall were too scared to run for cover.

CHAPTER XII

BLACK MAGIC

WHEN the uproar subsided so one could make himself heard, Mac said:

"Now I guess we got them pretty well convinced that weapons ain't of any use against us. I'm goin' to try to persuade them that they'll have to lay them down if they don't want us to scare 'em any more."

One of the men shouted:

"Strike the iron while it's hot, Skipper. The sooner you get 'em to drop them stickers the better I like it."

While the natives were clearing their eyes, mouths and nostrils of sand which had been showered upon them, Mac picked up a long pole. He leaned upon it in the manner of a native reposing at ease upon a spear. Thus he waited until the audience had sufficiently recovered to give him its undivided attention.

"Unconditional surrender without a drop o' blood bein' spilled," he chuckled, advancing a few steps toward the cowering natives. "This is an epoch in the annals of warfare."

"Yeah, try that some day when we run afoul of a gun lugger," scoffed Kennedy. "But for the present let's see you work it on them smokes. Bet you a bob you can't make 'em let go of their stickers."

"Gee, you're a game sport. A whole bob, eh? Now you just watch."

Mac had not spent the best part of his life dealing with savages for nothing. He could speak as plainly in sign language as in English. It must be understood that we were face to face with men whose language consisted of not much more than grunts. Even when these men conversed among themselves they depended as much upon their hands as their tongues.

When Mac was aware of scores of eyes staring spellbound, he imitated the motions of a native about to throw a spear. This he did with the pole. Then he glowered menacingly at the interested watchers and shook his head. With his free hand he made a warning gesture, pointed at the débris of the shattered war drum, bent down and carefully deposited the pole at the foot of a large rock which lay halfway between us and the natives. Now he stood erect, impressively confident of being master of the situation, pointed at the many weapons held by shaking hands, then at the pole near the rock and stepped back into our ranks.

"If they don't understand that," he

said, "we'll give them another dose of magic."

Apparently the natives had understood. With wild jabberings which sounded much like lamentations they eyed their spears like old friends with whom they were about to part. Broken hearts must have been there aplenty. But the devil doctors must have thought that their dignity was being assailed.

With returning vigor they once more tried their shouting, waving their abominable implements and tooting their horns. This time their whole attention was directed against Mac. Even my own bosom friend, the chief of chiefs, went back on me.

"Are you at it again?" roared Mac.

Like a street urchin at sight of a silk hat he picked up a rock, bigger than his fist, and made believe he was going to hurl it into the throng.

That was enough. Devils who could hurl air with such disastrous results as they had already demonstrated could not be trusted with a stone. Law and order was cast to the winds as the common people asserted their rights to preserve their own safety. The devil doctors were shouldered aside unceremoniously, and every warrior deposited his spear at the rock marked by Mac's pole.

But they held on to their bows and arrows and war clubs.

"I guess you apes got a single track mind," growled Mac under his breath. "Will I have to talk to you some more?"

HE SEIZED a rifle by the barrel and swung it as if he were using a club upon an enemy's head. At sight of the mysterious looking weapon even the devil doctors joined in the chorus of frightened wails. Then Mac went through the motions of an archer shooting his shaft and pointed vigorously at the heap of spears.

This time not a single objection was raised. The savages fairly jostled each other while adding the rest of their weapons to the spears.

"Now I got you!" exulted Mac. "An' now for a show I've had in my mind for some time. Here, you two chimney sweeps," he added, addressing Bunk and me, "this is where you come in with your act. Our whole success of rescuin' that preacher an' our success at gettin' workers will depend upon this tomfoolery. Kennedy, stand ready with your dynamite. At the first sign of any rally blow 'em to Kingdom Come, an' you others keep your rifles on them."

It could easily be conjectured what sort of deception Mac was about to stage for the baffled natives. He led us toward the pit.

"Hell, we won't mind goin' through there once more, eh, matey?" said Bunk.

"I knew you fellows wouldn't," Mac justified himself. "You fellows started it all an' I know you're anxious to see it through. But, say! Could anything have been staged better than the whole thing's worked out? I really believe there's something else besides us at work. But never mind that. The tide's about low an' your boat's in the cave. Now, when I make some crazy signs over you you just hurry through as fast as possible. Come round to the beach with your boat, but stay close to the cliff so the blacks won't see you from up here. I'll keep 'em interested with some kind of foolish stunts. You fellows hurry back by way of the jungle path, an' when you're ready to come out into the open, wave a stick out of the bushes. Then I'll make some signs an' you fellows will appear like you've dropped from the sky."

"Right," I said. "Go the limit."

Mac made signs like a Hindu fakir and down into the black cavern slipped Bunk and I. The last thing I heard was exclamations of surprise from the natives.

The gig was beached high and dry upon the rock bottom at the end of the tunnel. But on the slippery surface we had no difficulty in launching the boat. Then for a mad row around to the

beach. The jungle path now appeared like a familiar street to us. Where the dangerous pitfall had been, there was nothing but a black hole, fourteen feet long and five feet wide. Even with the charred débris of bamboo stakes covering its bottom it was fully eight feet deep. On both sides earth and scorched cane had caved in. I stopped Bunk long enough to remark—

"See, the thing extended over a foot under the brakes on each side."

Bunk shuddered when he reflected upon our night journey, noting how close to the pit we had crawled through the decoy stalks.

"By the Lord! After that I believe there's something in Providence after all," he said.

And before many days passed, Tom too was ready to make that same statement!

Ten minutes later we signaled with a stick from the bush.

By carefully peeping along the edge of the bush we could see Mac and the other white men, but no savage eyes turned our way. Many of the natives, even some of the painted ones, were now squatting upon the ground. Whatever Mac had done for the entertainment of his audience must have had some soothing effect, for the whole assembly appeared to be at ease.

Mac caught a glimpse of our repeated signals. Suddenly he seemed to have joined the cult of sun worshipers. With weird incantations he implored the sun to bring something besides light and heat upon the earth.

The sun was in the eastern sky. And we were east of those whom we were to impress. Imagination works wonders with those whose minds have all their lives been preyed upon by such base deceivers as the devil doctors. And the deceivers themselves are easily deceived.

Right before wondering, widening eyes the two devils who had disappeared in the coughing hell, hopped down from the sky on to the brink of the cliff!

Nothing could have been more convincing of our great chief's supernatural powers.

THE tribesmen regarded us with awed glances, many head shakings and low voiced ejaculations. The devil doctors, too, seemed to have arrived at their wit's ends. They went into noisy consultation among themselves. Every so often one of them would favor us with a glance which spoke of an awe, gradually growing as they discussed us.

Mac made himself comfortable on a large rock and said:

"I think that last trick fixed our reputation, boys. We might as well get busy, too, an' do a little plannin'. The first thing is, how are we goin' to make them understand what we're after? We got to get that missionary an' the girl he's been ravin' about out of the jam—if they're still alive—an' at the same time we'll see if we can't do a little recruitin' for divers. Now, do some thinkin', some of you."

"I says, grab a couple o' them painted divvils while we got 'em scared, Skipper," came a voice.

Kennedy swung around at the speaker.

"Talk sense, man. The minute we'd lay hands on any of them fellows they'd be so frenzied that they'd fight back like the cornered rats they are. No, young fellow, don't think that we're a man-o'-war's crew who can shell the bush with long range guns an' terrorize the natives that way. We're only a handful. We got to work with our wits."

"Yeah," agreed Mac. "Don't let's spoil it all by bein' fools. This is the most priest ridden place I ever came across. If we can come to some terms with them priests, or whatever they are, we'll have the island."

Some idea must have come to him at the moment he spoke of the priests. His eyes had wandered toward the triangular stone which bore the sketch of the temple in charcoal. He struck his thigh with the palm of his hand and jumped to his feet.

"All you fellows stand well clear of me," he ordered. "I'm goin' to see how thick these painted fakers are."

We retreated about ten paces and Mac beckoned the gaudiest of the priests to come to the stone. At first the savage seemed a little suspicious of the summons, but Mac managed to make it clear that he wanted him to get a close view of the stone. Then he also stood back.

Curiosity overpowered fear. Immediately came a concerted rush toward the flat stone. Then, amid surprised glances at us, came admiring "ahs" and vociferous jabbering.

"Now, then, All-Hands," suggested Mac, "suppose you give 'em another demonstration of your art. Make as good a picture of the sky pilot tied to a post as your imagination will let you."

Of course, when the redheaded devil approached the object of interest there was a wild, colorful scamper for safety. I did my very best to make the priest tied to a stake appear as life-like as possible with charcoal. Not satisfied with that, I drew a picture of a bamboo cage above the first one. Meaning, of course, that we knew of the existence of such a cage which was supposed to imprison an additional captive. Then I stepped back.

Like a lot of monkeys who simply could not resist temptation, the throng edged forward to satisfy its inborn curiosity. Then we were regarded with surprised, half tolerant, half disgusted looks. As much as to say—

"Well, you simpletons, if that's all this row has been about, we can easily get rid of you."

At once a determined rush for the woods was made. The devil doctors beckoned us to follow.

"Here, you livin' lumps of coal," bellowed Mac. "Do you think we're a bunch of fools?"

At the words the rush for cover stopped. Once more frightened glances were cast our way. Mac stepped forward and pointed at the ground.

"Right here!" he thundered.

"*Iyite eela!*" The devil doctors tried to repeat the magic words, all of them pointing at the spot which Mac indicated.

They nodded vigorous assent, almost shaking their crowns off. Then the whole assembly disappeared.

"Well, boys," chuckled Mac. "We've won our point. Now, as a matter of precaution, just collect all that junk there—" he pointed at the heap of weapons—"an' throw it all from the cliff."

For the next few minutes the air was thick with spears, arrows, bows and clubs, hurled into space. Then Mac sat down and calmly lighted his pipe.

"I wish I had some grub an' a drink," he grumbled.

"Your sky pilot must be still alive," said Kennedy. "Them smokes went at the job as if they thought we're lettin' 'em off easy. But I sure would like to know how they got hold of him the second time."

"Likely he didn't give a damn for his life as long's he knew his niece was in danger," I suggested. "He sure was a nervy cuss. My idea of drawing that picture of a cage was to let the blacks know that we wanted her too."

"Hist!" Kennedy suddenly admonished, holding up a warning finger. "I hear a racket in the bush. They must be on their way, but it seems to require the hell of a lot of effort to bring two prisoners to the front!"

"Be ready, boys," Mac said. "There might be some trick in this. Let fly at 'em if I give the word."

"Another thunderbolt in case it's needed," suggested Kennedy, starting to roll one of the war drums toward the bush. "Bunk, remember, just as before."

WITH willing hands assisting, the hollow log was placed in a strategic position. A dynamite stick was inserted. Then we waited, rifles ready.

Ten minutes later the branches stirred. Black forms, laboring, yelling

and tugging at something, interfering with each other's efforts, became visible. Whatever it was that offered such heroic resistance to such an overwhelming mob could not be seen through the squirming mass.

Something was wrong. Branches were torn down and helped to keep the mysterious something concealed from our sight. No eyes had time to watch us.

"Ready, Bunk, let fly," shouted Kennedy.

Boom! Amid flying splinters, stones and earth, the mob scattered in all directions. Something almost as bulky as a native hut dropped to the ground. Then our men could no longer restrain their mirth. They had been prepared for something which might require drastic measures, but before them was something which looked as if the natives had tried to prove that they had a sense of humor by carrying out the instruction I had given with my drawing in every detail.

In a cage which might have been intended to hold a rhinoceros, stood the much bedraggled, but otherwise unhurt missionary!

Mac fairly shook with laughter. Several of the natives got over the panic which the explosion had caused and thought the chance had come to make themselves solid with the devils. They did not demand to know where the joke lay. They simply joined in the laughter.

But the missionary did not seem to see the joke at all. To him the whole proceeding must have looked much more like a farce than a heroic rescue. If he had been scared up to then, he suddenly forgot all about it. The display of merriment at his expense, where there should have been grave danger, was a little too much for his dignity.

"You renegades! You heathen, a thousand times worse than these poor misguided creatures ever were with all their infamous, godless crimes!" he thundered, pounding the strong bars which held him captive. "What infamous deviltry are you playin' with these poor benighted children? It's not the balls that's in your guns nor the bombs you've been rocking this island with that's needed here. It's law and order and the word of God, which I am bringing, that's wanted where the likes of you bring bad to worse!"

He stopped for breath, wiping his streaming brow with his hand.

"Phew!" Mac said. "He's a missionary, all right, no question about that."

The natives gaped in awe. A battle of devils was taking place! Mac stepped close to the cage and said:

"Now, look here, my friend. That you should denounce us is nothin' new to me. But let me tell you this. It's a bomb which my men set off which saved your life. Attribute your salvation to whatever prayers you may have uttered at the time, I don't care. But you'll have to admit that your God enlisted our aid to help you. I've been dealin' with such fanatics as these natives all my life. The only way you can reason with 'em is by appealin' to their superstition as we did, unless you want to slaughter them with long range guns like your brave navies do.

"We are just plain traders. We came here to prospect, an' you may be thankful that we did."

But Mac's calm speech did not have the soothing influence which it should. However the missionary enlightened us somewhat as to the cause of his wrath with his next words. He retorted:

"You're traders, eh? I take it that you are the captain of the renegades that's causing all the disturbance. I know your methods o' trading. You give these poor children a penny's worth for every pound you carry off. If I but understood their language, I'd soon inform 'em of your base deception. There, back in the clearing, I was already making progress, getting them to give me some attention when you started shooting your bombs and spoiled it all."

"So that's it, eh?" This with satire in Mac's voice. "We broke up a reli-

gious meetin', after makin' it possible for you to hold it. Too bad. But let me tell you something, my friend. If you'd ever progressed far enough to make the devil doctors consider you a dangerous rival, you'd landed in the stew pot like many a one of your profession has done. But never mind that for the present. Haven't you told the boys who pulled you out last night that you've brought a niece of yours along? If that's the case—"

The missionary waved further good advice aside.

"Never you mind 'bout my niece," he shouted angrily. "She's safe and unharmed but for the shock your renegades gave her last night. The natives're worshiping her like she were a goddess."

MAC pocketed his hands and faced us as if he hoped for some one to make a suggestion.

"You ever hear the likes of it?" he demanded.

We were all too baffled to think of a reply. Mac's face suddenly flushed with anger. He swung back to the caged man.

"So that's no deception to let them blacks worship your niece as a goddess, eh? Man, why don't you practise what you preach?"

" 'Tis by their own will they're worshiping. They're not being enticed through murder and playing sorcery."

"Murder!" thundered Mac. "Look around you, man. Do you see a drop of blood that's been spilled?"

"How about those you murdered with your devilish explosion last night? 'Twasn't necessary to do that to save a man. You must have planned it before. With it you came near murdering my niece."

"Well, nobody could have known that any white person would be up there," countered Mac. "The few who were killed well deserved— Say, how about the crew of your schooner? Are they still alive? Hell!"

The missionary shuddered.

"You speak so much of hell. 'Twas the same with those lads. Hell was always on their tongue. At last they found it. Instead of letting me have my way they preferred to fight. They found the hell they've been calling for."

Mac turned about and faced Kennedy.

"Now what can you do with a fellow like that?" he demanded disgustedly.

"Hell," said Kennedy. "It's as plain as the nose on your face that he's crazy. Just pack him on board. We can't turn him loose here."

"No, he ain't crazy," snapped Mac. "He's so sincere that he takes his religion too seriously He thinks that the Power that saved him once will make it possible for him to carry on his work here on this devilish island. Of course we'll have to take him by force if he won't listen to reason."

"You have no right to take a man by force when he's working for the good of mankind," broke in the missionary. "It's piracy an' you'll live to rue it."

"Piracy, huh!" scoffed Mac. "Piracy you call it, keepin' a fool from committin' suicide?"

"You're endangering the life of a helpless girl, I warn you."

"That's just what I'm tryin' to prevent," retorted Mac. "An' since you'd be more of a hindrance than a help, I'm goin' to have you packed on board of my ship first. Now, will you go like a sensible man?"

Just how to handle a man so set upon his purpose was a problem.

"I will not go anywhere by my own will except back to my niece," he snapped.

"Well, I'm not goin' to deny you the privilege," assented Mac. "But if we take you with us, will you promise not to interfere with anything we find necessary to do?"

"I will not be a party in any deception," was the stubborn reply.

"Then, by the Lord, I'm not going to invade the bush encumbered with you. An' to save ourselves the trouble of man-

handlin' you I'll ship you on board in that same crate you're in like a monkey. You can't be left here, that's certain."

Mac beckoned for one of the baffled devil doctors to step closer. Instead of obeying, the fellow acted as if he were going to run.

"Stop!" thundered Mac, reaching for a stone.

At that the whole group stood as if petrified. At Mac's renewed beckoning two of them inched up to him like whipped curs.

"That's better," said Mac. "Now you're beginnin' to savvy."

He pointed at the cowering blacks, then at the cage. Next he bent his back and trudged a few steps as if he were carrying a heavy load, then pointed seaward.

The signs were understood. There came several sighs of relief at the simplicity of the task which was being imposed upon them, and the chiefs went into another noisy consultation. The result was that they barked out some orders at their subordinates. Each one of these was trying to make himself as inconspicuous as it was possible by daylight, but shirking was of no use. A score were singled out. Soon the cage was being carried in the direction Mac had indicated.

"How the devil will they get that wide box across that narrow bridge?" Kennedy expressed his doubt of success.

"I don't know." Mac shrugged. "Maybe they know of some other way."

And the savages proved that they knew of another, very simple way. With the helpless victim shouting all sorts of absurd threats at us, the cage was borne straight toward the brink of the cliff.

"GOOD Lord!" ejaculated Kennedy, springing forward. "Do those fools think we want him fed to the sharks? Avast there, you loons!"

Kennedy's advance had been so menacing that the bearers dropped the cage and fled in alarm. But the missionary had not been oblivious of the danger he was in. He proved that he was not quite ready to die, and that at times his faith might falter. His denunciations and threats suddenly became one great yell. Our men vented their brutal humor in raucous laughter. The devil doctors expressed their perplexity by shrugging their shoulders, shaking their enormous headdresses and looking at Mac as if they demanded to know who really was boss and whether that man knew his own mind.

In sheer desperation Mac made an attempt to make himself plain. He held a rifle across both extended palms, walked a few steps and gently lowered the rifle to the ground. His attentive pupils watched his every move.

Being satisfied that the natives understood that the burden must be handled with care, Mac seized the rifle by the barrel—causing a little momentary alarm, of course—and, dropping to his knees, made motions with the butt of the weapon as if he were paddling a canoe. Then he stood up and pointed at the ship.

"If that ain't gone through your thick skulls, you monkeys," he grumbled, "I'll blow the lot of you down an' do the job myself."

But there was no need of becoming rough with them. The natives seemed to have grasped the idea, but now they expressed their grief at being confronted with a rather difficult problem. Many of them stood on tip-toe and elevated their hands as high as they could reach above their heads. Then they pointed at the edge of the cliff. That meant that the cliff was too high for descent.

Now three of them arranged themselves in single file, spread their hands in a gesture of despair and slowly moved their palms together until they indicated a measurement equal to the width of an average man's hips. Holding the hands in that way, the three trudged forward a distance equal to the length of the bridge we had passed. Then they stood.

looked at Mac with an air of regret, shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders.

"That's plain enough," said Mac. "They mean the bridge, of course, an' that it's safe for only three at a time, an' too narrow for the cage. Well, we learned that there's no other way of gettin' up here anyway. Of course we can't let that roarin' lion out an' tie him so he can be carried across. Be too much weight for the bridge, I'm afraid. Besides that, I'd like to have that cage on board. It'd come in handy if we hold any of this bunch for the sake of peace."

But Mac was by no means beaten. At the same time he would not give the caged man the satisfaction of asking him if he would go willingly now. When dealing with a stubborn man he loved to show him that he could be as stubborn as the next.

"Bunk, you take a boat crew an' get down to the beach as fast as you can," he ordered. "Bring one of the boats into the mouth of the river an' throw your heavin' line up. All-Hands," he said to me, "you take four men an' show the blacks where to fetch the cage so it can be lowered into the boat, then stand by for the line. The rest of us will watch out that these smokes don't start any monkey business. Now hurry with the job so we can get our chow."

"Yeah, it'll be 'bout time for it," one man voiced his impatience, suggestively hitching his belt.

Kennedy took the hint.

"You, boat crew!" he shouted after the departing men. "On your way back, load up with some grub, an' don't forget a half dozen bottles."

At once the men began to show more interest in the proceedings.

"This is gonna be sport," one of the four which I selected as my bodyguard chuckled.

The missionary had calmed down. I think he began to realize his helpless position.

"Forever shame on you to submit God's servant to such indignity," he scolded. "If you'll let me out I'll go your way."

"Too late," I retorted. "You had your chance. I only obey orders."

About twenty minutes later I saw Bunk and his crew run across the beach and launch one of the whaleboats. A few minutes more and the boat was below us in the calm water of the stream.

Part of the equipment of all boats used by landing parties consisted of two long lines. The heaving line, about a quarter of an inch in thickness, and the whaleline, about three-quarters of an inch. The service for which the whale line was used on primitive shores was manifold and often severe. It might be used for warping a boat against a raging torrent, for raising coral rocks, or for swinging heavy sandalwood or ebony across a gorge. It was therefore strong and dependable, made of the best of hemp. The cage and its inmate, I knew, would not tax the strength of the line.

Bunk was standing in the boat's stern, swinging the coils of the heaving line.

"Stand by aloft!" he shouted.

Upward uncoiled the light line. I caught it, and with it hauled up the whale line. The latter was snubbed around a dependable tree, its end bent to the cage, and over the brink went the priest, imploring me to have a heart.

The native watchers looked as if they might have thought:

"You devils will have to feed that rack of bones up a bit before he'll make a decent dinner."

CHAPTER XIII

MY INITIATION

COCKNEY and the cook had not permitted the boat crew to return to us without making sure that we would be well provided for. Instead of sending six bottles of rum, they had made it eight.

Their foresight provided us with the very means we needed to try a chance

shot in the dark.

That men should stop to indulge in even such a modest repast as hardtack and a few other emergency rations while practically holding an enemy at bay may seem a little far fetched to some. But it must be remembered that Mac was the type of man who accredited his success and his survival of many scrapes to the fact that he always thought before he leaped. Not one of us had the slightest idea just how to attack this problem of doing something toward the rescue of a girl whom the natives had evidently decided to keep.

The fact that they were worshiping her as a goddess made the problem even more difficult to solve. Stealth and deception were our only chance.

At least, the brief respite we gained by partaking of a little nourishment gave us a chance to kill two or more birds with one stone. First of all we fortified ourselves for a campaign the duration of which was indeterminate. Heroes who can "stick it out" on empty stomachs exist only in fiction. Then it gave us a chance to do a little planning. However, the more we planned, the more we were convinced that the hardest part of our task lay ahead of us.

Every plan, after being discussed pro and con, seemed to outline something like this:

Less than a score of well armed white men driving heaven knew how many poorly armed fanatics to frenzy with but one result—a row of yawning "stew pits" and a girl remaining captive.

But since Fate had been doing all the planning thus far, she was not going to allow her work to be spoiled by the muddled brains of men. It must have been that fickle goddess who had reminded us of our empty stomachs so she could play her hand as she saw fit.

One can imagine what an interesting sight it must have been for a horde of simple savages to watch a group of devils repose upon rocks and eat. People will be curious about other creatures' food. In a civilized community they will try to invade the zoo at feeding time. Slumming parties will go to the restaurants in foreign settlements to satisfy their curiosity.

That curiosity seems to be a weakness of man with which even the most primitive savage is afflicted.

But in this case it was not so much the food which caused so much craning of necks and so many longing glances. There was something far more interesting than food.

There were certain calabashes with a translucent, shining, dark green appearance which at short intervals were passed from devil to devil. Each calabash had an elongated neck which its momentary holder would place to his lips, and then, with an ecstatic expression on diabolic features, go through the motion of star gazing.

That *was* something worth watching and smacking one's thick lips for in hopeful anticipation! That the devils were drinking some liquid out of the strange calabashes was certain, but surely it was something different from what had ever been drunk out of coconut calabashes or gourds.

Meanwhile we made no progress with our plans for a rescue party and, since objects before one's eyes will often cause a stressed mind to wander from one subject to another, our conversation drifted gradually into a different channel.

Kennedy had been studying the natives thoughtfully for several minutes.

"I'm beginnin' to doubt the chance of pickin' a divin' crew out of these smokes," he observed. "For the life of me I haven't seen anything to convince me that they ever go more than waist-deep in the water."

"What makes you think so?" queried Mac.

"I haven't seen any ornaments of pearl shell or coral. The chiefs are the only ones that have any decorations, an' all they lug around is bone an' fresh water trash. These fellows are hillmen. It looks as if their only sport is makin' raids on neighborin' tribes."

"Don't overlook the shark's teeth, an' remember that the points of their arrows were made of stingray bones." Mac proved his alertness in observing details. "Van Asvelt found a way of teachin' 'em to dive, didn't he?"

"Yeah—with the gun," grunted Bunk.

"Gun be damned," retorted Mac. "I've an idea that we might get along without coercion. If we once get so far as to show those fellows a few knives an' hatchets, they'll be anxious to earn 'em. Now, since we're not makin' any headway with the other thing let's try gettin' confidential with one of them painted ornaments first. Maybe that'll help us gettin' information about the girl. Maybe we can buy her out for a trifle."

Kennedy was skeptical. He said:

"I doubt whether anything we got will interest them. I don't know how they handled that schooner—maybe we'll find out after the sky-pilot cools off—but it strikes me that at least the chiefs would cart some of the plunder of that vessel around with them."

"Not necessary at all," objected Mac. "They're so superstitious an' ignorant that they were afraid to set foot on that vessel. Simply set fire to her an' let her drift. Can't you see how they're gloatin' at our bottles? They never saw any before, an' that's just what I'm goin' to use for the first stab."

SAYING this, Mac placed one of the bottles to his lips. He only sipped at the liquor, but during the purposely prolonged process of drinking he rubbed his stomach as if the contents of that particular bottle affected his interior with more than common delight. Now he squinted at the bottle, and finding it to contain not more than half an inch of liquor, he spread his features in a most amiable smile and extended the smile producer toward the nearest devil doctor. He beckoned the savage to come nearer.

"You ain't goin' to give that nigger any of that *good* rum, are you?" expostulated Kennedy in alarm. "You'll be spoilin' his appetite for our trade rum."

"No, I won't," insisted Mac. "When he tastes that vitriol after this good stuff an' finds that it burns his guts so much more, he'll think it's the best of the two.

"Come on here, you walkin' paintbrush! I ain't goin' to eat you."

"Who the hell'd want to?" roared one of the men.

"Shut up, you damn fool. You'll scare him again. He's weakenin'."

The savage had actually inched a step forward, but at the roar from our ranks he became frightened. He shot uncertain glances at his confrères, then skidded back and made himself very inconspicuous.

But the fellow who at our first encounter with them had taken such a fancy to me—or rather to my scalp—seemed to be made of nobler stuff. Possibly a feeling of superiority urged him to show the others up. His painted visage immediately cleft itself from ear to ear. The hideous effect he produced could be called neither smile nor grin. He tapped an eager forefinger upon the streaks on his chest, then pointed at the alluring bottle.

Mac nodded encouragingly.

"Aha," he said. "This fellow's the big chief. I kinda thought so. Pleased to meet you, Chief!"

The savage's head acknowledged Mac's nod with a clattering of bones, dried lizards and crocodile teeth. He stepped boldly forward, extended his hand and gingerly felt of the smoothness of the bottle with the tips of his fingers.

Mac nodded encouragement, smiled once more and pointed at the fellow's ugly lips. The scene was something of the kind which spectators at a monkey cage enjoy when somebody hands a somewhat timid monkey a banana.

Having ventured so far, the tempted son of Adam could not resist. His greedy eyes fairly ate the bottle as he grasped it with both hands. First with one eye, then with the other he peered suspi-

ciously into the muzzle. He held it to his nose and inhaled one long breath. Then he looked at Mac and grinned.

The savage fell before the spell the rum had cast. The bottle found its way to his lips and cautiously his head tipped back. Through the corners of his eyes he kept watching Mac.

A tiny sip, a questioning pause, a smack of thick lips, a slight sputter, another sniff—courage mingled with determination, and up went the bottle to stay up. In a jiffy it was drained to the last drop.

Meanwhile the experimenter's confrères had gathered enough courage to draw near. Evidently reading the ecstasy on the big chief's face made them regard him with envious eyes. The fellow whom Mac had first beckoned looked especially mournful as he watched the bottle's contents transferred to the royal hold.

Our friend lovingly looked at the empty bottle which he now held in one hand. With the other he rubbed his stomach and smudged up all his decoration.

We had been watching the proceeding with the keenest interest. Now we were hopefully awaiting the after effects of the rum. It would have been the show of our lives to see so primitive a savage gloriously drunk. But disappointment was to be our reward.

Desperately clinging to the bottle, the fellow exposed his double row of glistening, pointed teeth. That grimace at so close a range would have imbued faint hearts with fear. But it was merely his way of affecting a smile of gratitude. Once more his finger tapped his chest.

"Uva—Uva Kulu," he half howled, half yapped. His men nodded eagerly, thus casting aside any possibility for dispute as to the truth of the statement.

"Uva—Uva Kulu," groaned Mac. Then aside to Kennedy, "Now I wonder whether that's his name or his title?"

"What's the difference?" Kennedy chuckled. "Introduce yourself anyway. I think maybe he wants to swap names with you—an island custom."

"The hell he will with me," snorted Mac in disgust. "What's a second mate for? He took a fancy to All-Hands anyway, so let him swap with *him*."

The chief must have thought Mac lacking in etiquette.

"Uva—Uva Kulu!" he repeated in a louder voice, tapping his chest vigorously. Then he pointed at Mac.

Mac shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, and indicated me, the official goat.

"Too much fella devil-devil doctor." He elevated his voice with considerable emphasis on the "too much".

The native perked up with increasing interest as he diverted his gaze toward my scalp. Joy danced in his eyes when it dawned upon him that he was to be honored with the name of a red headed devil. And what an eloquent sounding, lengthy name at that!

Kennedy's conjecture seemed to be correct. The fellow's eyes fairly devoured me when he took a closer look at my hair. He must have thought that with my name transferred to him he would be capable of all sorts of magic.

I took the hint. For the sake of success, I might as well make the best of a bad bargain. The chief was getting a counterfeit anyhow.

"Too Much Fella Devil-Devil Doctor!" I yelled in a loud voice to make the ceremony impressive, tapping my chest as the chief had done.

The chief nodded so hearty an approval that I was threatened with a shower of bones and lizards. Then, to the howled delight of my shipmates I discovered who had the best of that bargain.

My newly acquired blood-brother condescended to take a good, long smell of me, and I was expected to follow suit!

"At it you go!" shouted one of the men boisterously. "If you back out now, we'll all go in the pot."

But I was game. At the risk of losing my last meal, I flattened my nose against the filthy chest and held my breath.

But even without taking a breath, I thought I was being gassed.

And now came the revised introduction. The chief proudly faced the assembly. He took my left hand and placed it upon his head—it rested upon heaven knew whose rib bones. Then he placed his hand upon my scalp. Whatever was on his palm I don't know, but it was so sticky that, when he at last removed it, he must have had a good handful of hair, roots and all.

"Too-Mush-Fla-Debbil-Debbil-Dac-Doc!" he introduced himself, poking his finger almost through his breastbone.

Again I was game.

"Uva—Uva Kulu!" I made my identity known in the same manner.

CHAPTER XIV

RECRUITING

MAC was right in his glory. He loved those humorous diversions springing out of the serious business of trading with savages. I certainly received my full share of kidding. But let them all have their fun at my expense. My chance to have the last laugh came. I was now a big chief. And a chief has unlimited power.

Is not he a wise chief who knows how to make his men love him like a brother?

Well, with that thought in my mind I proceeded to execute my power. Incidentally I squared for the many jibes of which I was now the victim.

There was quite a little rum left in the remaining seven bottles. This I collected at once.

"What you gonna do?" demanded Kennedy.

"Never you mind. You'll see directly," I answered.

"Don't you fellows know enough not to monkey with a chief?" admonished Mac.

He knew what was on my mind and he approved heartily. Things were coming our way and he was not going to interfere.

The lesser chiefs began to smack their lips in fond anticipation. Seeing that the headman had fared so well they did not draw away in alarm. In fact they began to crowd so as hardly to give me elbow room for dividing the rum evenly so that none of them would be left.

Incidentally my blood-brother came in for a second share. But, of course, blood is thicker than water. He must have come to the conclusion that the devils were not as white as they were painted.

"Now," said Mac, "while you got them all in good humor an' ready to give their shirts away—if they had any—suppose you approach the subject of gettin' divers."

The sun was blazing down unmercifully, and Mac, who carried a fair amount of flesh, was quite willing to "pass the buck" when it came to the strenuous work of speaking in sign language.

"Well, but you're the skipper," I protested. "The first thing you know these fellows will think I'm the mainstay."

"Yeah, but you're the big chief now," said Kennedy with a smirk. "You ought to be able to talk with your brother better than any of us."

There seemed to be not a chance to evade the ordeal. I made a try at it anyway.

First I pointed at the gathered natives, the rank and file of which stood a respectable distance away. Then I lay down on my stomach and went through the motions of swimming. That being clear to my audience, I got to my knees; bending my head lower and lower until it touched the ground, I imitated a dive to the bottom. While in that posture I picked up a stone, then, gradually rising, I pretended to be swimming upward to the surface of an imaginary sea.

The natives had nodded their understanding at every move. Encouraged, I pointed once more at the blacks, then at the little atoll which lay like a stripe of white and green beyond the ship.

Mac looked at me as if he expected

more of the performance. Then he said calmly:

"Are you through? As a circus clown you'd be a success. I bet the blacks thought you were just tryin' to express your joy at bein' made one of 'em."

But for once I had a good laugh on Mac.

Now came an animated conference between the devil doctors. The common people seemed to have no voice in the matter, although I strongly suspected that the value of their hides was being discussed. And sure enough. After a minute of jabbering my blood-brother shouted something at the throng, and a well built, deep chested savage detached himself from the group and came forward. He seemed to be a little pleased over the distinction.

Immediately the chief set to work. He seemed to take the matter quite seriously. His air was dramatic, not clownish. His hands described a squat, broad shouldered, bearded man. Then his hand swept the sea from west to north, was brought to rest upon the atoll and swept slowly toward the beach below the cliff. Now he gestured at the sun as if he commanded it to vanish from the sky; shutting his eyes, he groped his way around like somebody moving about in darkness; he pointed at the embarrassed native whom he had called, then leaped at him like a leopard, seized him by the neck and dragged him a few steps seaward. Once more, very dramatically, he pointed at the atoll.

WITH his spread fingers he marked off countless numbers, seized the other man by the shoulders and roughly hurled him to the ground. Now he bent down, swayed his body like a swimming fish, lunged at the prostrate man and fastened his teeth upon the man's thigh. Once more he let his hand rest upon the atoll, then slowly swept the sea from north to west. In conclusion he held up one finger, pointed at his subject, and with a gesture expressing utter helplessness, he nodded impressively toward us.

Mac had watched the whole performance with sober mien.

"That was givin' us Tom's whole story in pantomime," he said. "Why, that fellow whom the chief put on exhibition is the fellow whom Van let live to tell the tale. A lucky thing that Tom ain't here. That fellow might recognize him. It's almost uncanny the way the whole thing is comin' out! How will it end?"

With a gesture of surrender to the inevitable he rose to his feet.

"We got to have divers," he announced with determination. "Sharks prefer white meat to black, so you fellows can't handle that work alone, an' it'd take us more than six months to get a decent load. Now the first thing to do is to let these fellows know that we are not friends of, but masters of, the sharks."

Mac's eyes roved seaward. Not far from the disturbed waters near the rocks there were always some fins circling about. Right there seemed to be a regular feeding ground for sharks. Mac beckoned at Bunk and Kennedy to follow him to the edge of the cliff. Curiosity took care of the natives so that they did not lag far behind.

"Now, you two marksmen," said Mac, "make sure that you don't miss a shot. Every fin that pops up, plug it."

Bunk and Kennedy went at their task with zest. Shot after shot cracked to make the natives wince. But when they saw one fin after another disappear with spasmodic jerks of huge tails, their sensitive ears soon became deafened to the sharp barks of the rifles. In those whom they had feared they now recognized an ally who, with his mysterious devil clubs, proved that he was master of the arch enemy of their ancestors.

The scene which was now unfolded was such as can sometimes be witnessed on a city street, after the neighborhood bully has fallen before an unknown champion. How quickly those who had feared the bully all their lives will turn their fear of him into wrath, and do

their utmost to impress upon the conqueror that they are now his friends.

What a battle cry the natives sent into the air after three or four fins had jerked out of sight! Shaking their fists at the spots where the sharks had gone down, they howled words of defamation. They informed them what would happen to the entire genus which swims the sea under the cognomen of shark, and the sooner these monsters would assemble right there at the foot of the promontory the sooner the agony of death hovering over their heads would be over.

The noisy demonstration lasted for fully five minutes. When at last it subsided, Mac knew that he had the savages under his thumb.

The terrible devils turned out to be allies and protectors.

Mac did not give the enthusiasm time to cool down. He made known his contempt for everything formidable that inhabits the sea. He seized his own wrist with his teeth and shook it as if he was trying to wrench it off.

"Ugh!" he grunted, then he laughed and made a contemptuous gesture toward the sea. He shook his head, pointed at the natives, bit his wrist once more and waved the mere possibility of such danger which the bite had insinuated away.

Now, while the iron was hot, was the time to apply the master craftsman's strokes. The time to appeal to the savage's desire of possessing something which he would cherish above all else.

Mac drew his sheath knife, a sample of our trading cutlery, inexpensive but of fine Sheffield steel. The knife was shining, brand new. He had hurriedly belted it around his waist before leaving the ship. Mac knew his business. He flourished the blade like a conjurer his wand, made the sun's rays reflect into admiring, greedy eyes like silver darts. Now he went through the motions of a swimming man disemboweling a shark. This done, he extended the knife for closer inspection. With the fingers of his free hand he indicated uncountable numbers. Then pointed at the natives one by one.

Jabbering excitedly, the savages crowded around to get a good view of the alluring weapon. Each one had to test its edge somehow. Some tried it on their fingers, others had sense enough to use a piece of wood. With a multiplicity of words and gestures they informed each other what an efficacious weapon the knife would be. Pantomime throat slittings were there aplenty. The survivor of Van Asvelt's victims was the central figure. He proudly elected himself a lecturer. At last, when the enthusiasm was at its height, he expressed his willingness to serve as a diver by tapping his chest and nodding eagerly.

Mac's pockets were bulging with something I had not noticed before. Now he produced more evidence that he never went ashore without preparing for any emergency. His hand dived into a pocket and he produced a string of gaudily colored glass beads. Before the new recruit could get over his astonishment, the string of beads was slung around his neck.

The sight of the glittering necklace produced a chorus of "ahs". Within fifteen minutes of necklace slinging we had our quota of thirty divers.

The knives, they were informed through untiring gestures, would be forthcoming when they reported for duty.

CHAPTER XV

THE HIGH PLACE

THE past events had done much toward improving our mode of communicating with the natives.

It is surprising how quickly these primitive creatures absorb knowledge. If they find it to their advantage, they will pick up words of a language quite foreign to them and memorize such words with their meanings. On the other hand, if they think that something might be gained that way, they can be

as stupid as beetles. Foxy is about the right term to apply to them.

By now the big chief had already acquired a vocabulary of about twenty words. Such terms as ship, sea, devil, fella and a few others he was now able to interject between signs quite intelligently. He was as alert a rascal as I have ever met. But that made the serious business of coming to some trading agreement less difficult.

Mac was a square dealer. Even when he was forced to be a little rough at times, he made atonement for it later on. Obviously we had reached the stage where drastic measures could be avoided. Nevertheless we neither relaxed our vigilance nor did we endeavor to enlighten the savages to the fact that we were but ordinary mortals. To the contrary. Mac made it plain to the chiefs that there were worse devils than we still on board the ship. Those who had sent the streak of fire into the sky during the past night. One of those devils had hair which was even redder than mine. Why, we ourselves paid tribute to that devil. To him we had sent the caged man.

A good thing the missionary was not present to spoil the hash!

The chiefs now acted as if they were convinced of our sincerity But for some reason as yet unknown to us we were given to understand that the top of that cliff was no place to discuss a franchise. We were invited to follow them to what we thought would be their village.

Where we had first seen the savages break from the bush, our guides led us through the branches. Before us lay a perfectly straight, well defined path through the jungle. The path ran almost due south and led up an easy incline.

We took the precaution of keeping all the savages in front of us. They were unarmed, did not seem to lament the loss of their weapons; but still we did not trust them. Intent upon maintaining our good will, I presume, not one of them made an effort to get behind our backs. Everything looked too easy to inspire confidence. Our guns and dynamite were kept handy. And we watched where our leaders put their feet, for our minds were on possible pitfalls.

After traversing that eery road for a thousand yards we emerged upon a clearing.

No native huts were to be seen. Near the farthest end, which was south from where we emerged, there was a long, low hovel. Its windowless walls, apparently without an entrance, were built of branches and mud. It was topped by a high peaked thatch roof. That building was some sort of temple, also used for holding meetings of importance. In it the spirits of departed chiefs resided.

At the north end of the clearing, to the right of the path from which we emerged, were two sheds, plain wooden posts upholding thatch roofs. These sheds sheltered large, blackened, greasy stone slabs. For what purpose these slabs served was obvious. They were the carving tables for long pig!

At our left the clearing was bordered by the high bank of a calm lagoon, through which the river flowed.

In the space between the temple and the open sheds were several stone lined pits and heaps of soot covered stones. Most of us knew what all this meant. We had been invited to a meeting on the High Place!

When we emerged from the shaded path Mac's eyes took in his surroundings at a glance. His face clouded when he saw that we had not come upon a village.

"These niggers are up to some trick," he said. "Boys, be on your guard. Keep the dynamite handy, Kennedy, an' some of you just keep a stone in your hand, so, if we throw a stick, they'll think it was a stone into which we put magic."

But the natives were more nervous than we. They seemed to be careful of every move they made. Whether their caution was inspired by the sanctity of the place, or whether it was due to fear of us, I do not know.

The chiefs led the way to the temple.

One of them raised a curtain of thick, woven matting which hung on the east wall of the building. Thus an opening not more than four feet square was revealed. Apparently this was the only access to the interior. The sill of this door was more than two feet above the ground. It seemed as if access were made as difficult as possible.

The chiefs crawled through without hesitating, then beckoned us to follow. Some of us, urged by curiosity more than by determination, peered in. The whole interior was dully illuminated by a heap of glowing embers on some sort of hearth about three feet high. An altar it must have been. It stood near the end farthest from the entrance.

The priests were gathering around the fire, were blowing on it, coaxing up small tongues of flame from which they lighted candle nut torches. The reddish glow on their bodies revealed that they were all there, that none of them was concealed in some dark corner. With their ugly features tinctured by the unwholesome light they suggested some scene in Hades.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Marshal Feng
ARTIST AND PILGRIM

By JAMES W. BENNETT

CHINA'S great anomaly, in Western eyes, is a broad shouldered, wind bitten soldier-of-fortune with the bland eye of a child and a consummate nerve. Marshal Feng Yu-hsiang is his name, and it is pronounced somewhat breathlessly: Fung-e-shang. Feng has a penchant for upsetting governmental applecarts. Whoever may be in power in China, that person must reckon with an uncompromising opposition from Feng. The marshal has one undeviating rule in life: To be against the government.

Yet, today, Feng has hung up the sword and has taken up the profession of painting. Painting plum blossoms, to be precise. Without his usual bodyguard of troopers who formerly kept watch night and day before his door, he is traveling alone through West China. He is stopping at monasteries, eating the simple, meatless fare of the Buddhist brotherhood, and sleeping on bare earthen floors.

Soon he will strap on his sword again, gather about him an army of enthusiastic soldiers, and be off to the wars. Yet this seeming anomaly which so puzzles the foreigner, is actually a characteristic Chinese gesture. The nation's poets, scholars and painters, all have been wanderers. They have left the narrow, thronged lanes of the cities and have gone into the solitude of the mountains. There they have studied the contour of pine trees etched against a sunset sky or spent endless hours contemplating the texture of the lotus petal. Much of their work has been done without hope of reward: their poems written anonymously on temple walls, their paintings hung on the branches of a flowering tree.

But there is one man whose example is undoubtedly responsible for Marshal Feng's present renunciation of military

power. This was the Manchu emperor, Shun Chih, first of his line.

Legend has it—a legend as firmly fixed in the Chinese mind as a historical fact—that Shun Chih did not die at the time he officially "ascended the dragon." Instead, a lay figure was inserted in the imperial coffin and buried with glittering pomp, while Shun Chih stole away from the "Orchid City." In the garb of a peasant, he sought admission to a monastery deep in the western hills, fourteen miles from Peking. This legend, while officially denied, has the weight of considerable circumstantial evidence in its favor. One of the anonymous poets of that period, 1661, wrote of Shun Chih:

> He threw away the Empire
> As one casts away a worn out shoe.

As he climbed to the summit of the last range of hills, Shun Chih—being human—must have turned for a final glimpse of the great city which had been his capital. He must have recalled the impressive daybreak audience with its courtiers in silver threaded peacock robes, kowtowing in great waves before his presence. He must have given at least one glance toward the women's palaces where—for his sole delectation—were gathered the flower of the Manchu Banner Clans. But Shun Chih went on, deliberately chose the monastic life.

Twice did the next emperor, Shun Chih's son, come to the monastery to perform the filial kowtow before his anchorite father. It must have been fantastic to see the wearer of the Dragon Robes humbly thumping his forehead on the worn earth of the monastery cell, before that figure meanly garbed in the silver gray cloth of the Buddhist order.

When at last Shun Chih died, the monks embalmed the body in a great earthen jar of brine, then rendered it even more impervious to decay by coating it with tawny lacquer. Robing it in imperial yellow—color sacred to the emperor—they mounted it, seated in the contemplative pose of a Buddha, on a throne. Behind it was raised a magnificent screen of carved *tzu-t'an* wood.

And so it remains today. Shun Chih's face holds much of beauty, that beauty which is inseparable from benignity and peace. The lips are faintly smiling as though in gentle amusement at the strut and fret of life. With the passing of the centuries, the yellow robe has faded to a soft saffron.

On a small table before the figure lie a cup of tea and a snuff bottle. The eyes, half open, seem to contemplate with approval these twin aids to repose. A single wand of pressed sandalwood glows softly. Its thin spiral of smoke curls about Shun Chih's nostrils and mounts to the freshly gilded, newly decorated wooden beams of the room.

And it is because of these very decorations that one gets the first hint of the profound effect which the Manchu emperor has exercised upon the present day war lord. For, this work of refurbishing, gilding and painting the formerly dilapidated old shrine was by Feng's orders and performed by Feng's troops. That Winter, after he had captured Peking, this monastery was the marshal's headquarters.

I visited the temple that Spring. The marshal had left Peking by that time. But the old Bonze told me, with some eagerness, of the long hours that Feng had stood, rapt in contemplation, before the mummy. The priest repeated to me several of the marshal's phrases—expressions of a wistful longing to get away from the dusty movement of armies, the bloody clash of battle, and to go on a pilgrimage. The charm of Shun Chih's face, faintly smiling, beatific, must have etched itself with powerful acid on the troubled and weary heart of the war lord. For at that moment Feng was living in hourly fear of assassination.

Yet Feng's desire to escape is not purely a Chinese twist of character; it is universal, man's eternal wanderlust. An English bard expressed it, some six hundred years ago, in the line: "When longen folk to goon on pilgrimages."

The Story of a Beggar and a Throne

SON *of the* PROPHET

By WM. ASHLEY ANDERSON

AN ARAB hunchback was squatting by the Guebi gate talking to two chained Abyssinians of distinction. The temporary economic misfortune that had brought them to chains for debt did not seem particularly to embarrass them, for they were chatting in low pleasant accents on the destiny of the world.

It was a night of African moonlight. The startling pearl shell whiteness was diffused over a silent world of shadowy eucalyptus groves, and the bareness of marketplace and vast open meadows. The scent of roses was in the air, mingled with wood smoke seeping through the thatch of some nearby *tokhuls*, and the lusty smell of hot horses in a cold, clear atmosphere.

Wrapped in black woolen cloaks with broad brimmed felt hats pulled down upon their foreheads, the bearded Abyssinians sat with backs against the stone pillar of the gate talking of world conquest; for though the country seemed to sleep about them under the staring face of the moon, there was a tense expectancy of action vibrating across the hills.

"It can't go on," observed Georgios, with assurance, lighting a cigaret and settling more comfortably in the dust. "You will see. It means the end of the prince."

"You truly think he will be deposed? Is it possible?"

"It will happen. Our faith is more important than this clown."

"He is not a clown yet."

"He was always a clown—from the time he won Menelik's favor with his pretty boy tricks until the Moslems won him with their pretty women."

The Arab hunchback winced and raised his face to protest; but Georgios laughed.

"Peace, Achmed. The women are not necessarily Moslem. He has espoused daughters of Somalis, Danakils, Armenians, Egyptians; a mixed lot; but understand me, son of the Prophet, though we have no objection to his conduct with women, we will not permit any ruler to abandon our religion. Yassou has been wearing a turban and they say he has actually dedicated a mosque in Harrar."

"Thanks to God," murmured the hunchback devoutly.

"Ah, well, of course it is a satisfaction to you. But you Moslems don't yet understand that if this keeps up, we'll be hanging you to trees in the marketplace. I assure you, this prince is done for. You Moslems told him he could conquer the world by a union with Islam. Of course *we* could. The Turks are at the Suez Canal now. We could join with the Egyptians and Arabians, and within three months all Africa and Western Asia would be under the green banner. We could bring this war in Europe to a strange end, with our prince ruler of the world!"

As Georgios said this he raised his arms and flung out his hands with a dramatic gesture, not indifferent to the irony of the chains that enslaved him.

"Yes, look at these shackles on my wrists. You think I am a prisoner? Moslem, I can sit here in the shadow of the Guebi perfectly serene; for isn't it written: 'What profit is there to a man who conquers the whole world, if he suffers the loss of his soul?' What can you know of this, with your Islamic creed? You are bound in chains far more binding than mine, because mine can be struck off, and I can stand up strong and swift with a scimitar in my hand. But you are the slave of a deformity, God pity you! In addition, you have become a slave to your own unnecessary sense of shame. What good is it for you to think of world conquest when you haven't got the strength or courage to stand up before any man?"

Achmed rose to his feet with a choked snarl, pressing his long, thin hands to his forehead. A bareheaded guard in long white cotton toga thrust his head toward him, exclaiming roughly:

"Shut up! They're coming!"

Suddenly the courtyard swirled with life. The swift movement of black cloaks and white togas in the brilliant light and shadow of the night gave an uncanny effect to the boiling up of men and horses. Sharp outcries, broken shouts, the snort and nicker of the animals, sent the alarm like bush fire from *tokhul* to *tokhul,* over the hills, into the tents and under the shadows of trees. There was a startling rip of musketry. All at once the guns of the Guebi exploded with a terrific roar. Did this mean world conquest? Or peace for embattled Abyssinia?

The Arab hunchback and his friends were on their feet, staring into the shifting shadows of the Guebi yard. A small body of horsemen suddenly trotted toward them. Georgios and his companions lithely twisted aside; but Achmed could not move as gracefully. The leading horseman, a bearded figure of marble and ebony, staring with burning eyes straight ahead, thrust out a sandaled foot that caught Achmed in the face, sending him spinning into the dust. The bodyguard passed, and Achmed rose painfully to his feet, trembling violently.

Georgios touched him gently.

"Peace, Achmed," he said. "At least it was no common foot."

"Who was it?" gasped the hunchback, rubbing his polluted face with fury and repugnance. "Who was it?"

"Ras Mikael himself, King of Wallo, father of the deposed prince."

"May he burn!" shrieked Achmed amid the uproar about him. "May he burn! Father of filth! Oh, God, look on this crippled body—put strength into my arms. May his face be in the dust. May he eat dirt. *Hudha!* Put a sword into these hands and see if I will stand up to him!"

Squires on foot and *rases* on horseback and mule were now pouring through the gate in broken groups, tumbling Achmed awkwardly aside. Those who did not laugh at him, dazzling flashing grins, scowled ferociously. The exuberance of the crowd submerged all private feelings. The uproar of rifles and cannon, yelling men and screaming women, filled the hills of Addis Abeba with pandemonium. The brittle silence of the cold moonlit night was shattered into explosive fragments. Careless bullets rained in the dust of the marketplace. A night of rejoicing!

Georgios was right. The wanton young prince, absent over the border in Somaliland, had in fact been deposed by the supreme council of *rases;* and Zeoditou, the plump daughter of Menelik, had been prevailed upon to ascend the most ancient imperial throne in the world—the seat of the Lion of Judah—the chair of Prester John.

IN THE days that followed, it seemed to the dominating Christians of Shoa that the integrity of the country was now secure. The Teutonic and Islamic conspiracy to seduce the prince away from his ancient Christian religion to the banner of a fighting Islamic hegemony had failed. Te Deums were chanted in Addis Abeba, and the Coptic priests held services of thanksgiving throughout the empire, from Tigre in the north, by the borders of Nubia, into the equatorial provinces far to the south.

Two figures of destiny escaped immediate attention.

One was Ras Mikael, King of Wallo, burning with rage and resentment as he streaked northward to his kingdom. It was his own son who had been deposed. No matter what the prince's guilt might be, the insult came home to the father. As Mikael had looked around at the dark faces of the supreme *rases,* comrades on old battlefields, chieftains who knew his worth, who undoubtedly suspected the agony of mortification in his heart, he would gladly have drawn his scimitar on the spot if there had been a flicker of hope. But he knew those *rases* too well. With a grunt he gave assent to the decision, then rose and left the council room in silence. Baltcha, the lean fanatic monk, black and dangerous as a cobra, touched his cloak as he passed.

"Friend," he said austerely, "this means peace for our country."

Ras Mikael said nothing till he passed the door, and his squire ran to him, leading his famous mare, Roll-them-up. Then putting his toe into the stirrup ring and charging for the gateway, he muttered aloud—

"So long as I have a horse under me there will be no peace!"

The other figure was Achmed, the hunchback.

Achmed had come to Addis Abeba from Sheik Omar, leader of Moslems and a warrior of distinction, carrying a message secretly for Ras Mikael. The message had been delivered, a message offering an alliance for war or for peace; and Achmed was resting himself among his Abyssinian acquaintances at the gateway of the Guebi, waiting for a reward, when Ras Mikael dashed by, pushing him violently aside—insulting him, polluting him, debasing him in the dust.

It was a servile, sensitive cripple who fell into the dust. But it was a raving murderous Arab who rose with dust and

curses in his mouth.

All that week Ras Mikael pressed northward to Dessie, his thatched capital, in a bleak wilderness of sun scorched mountains. He moved at furious speed on the finest Arab horses, skimming the gold and green meadows of the highlands, splashing through brawling crystal streams reflecting the living green of mountain cedars, picking his way lightly through desert thorn bush and around the boles of giant euphorbias.

He rode like a devil on an errand of vengeance, seeing more and more clearly with each day's march the possibility not only of satisfying his vengeance, but of actually gaining a world for his reward—as easily as his ancestors had succeeded in putting dynasty after dynasty on the thrones of old Egypt.

All that week there followed behind him, crawling painfully along the boulder strewn trails, the crippled figure of Achmed, the hunchback. Achmed suffered greatly. In a few days his sandals were worn thin; he found no rest for his aching back, sleeping upright in the frosty nights against the rough bark of wild fig trees or cedars, with a small fire smoldering at his feet to defend him from hyenas who chittered and laughed like afrits in the shadows around him, while jackals yelped, and the tree hyraxes shrieked interminably. Once he heard the throbbing grunt of a lion, and scrambled in a panic up a tree, to spend a horrible night frozen to a thorny limb.

At first mounted men and pack trains laden with honey, wax and green hides passed him on horse or mule, or tall lean men on foot trotting easily in flexible sandals. These were mostly Shoans, all armed with rifles and scimitars; and they called quick greetings to him, though they forced him off the trail. But soon the trail became lonely.

Achmed was not a gluttonous eater, and he observed the fastidiousness of Moslems in the quality of the food he ate; but after limping along for a full day and night through sand and stone and thorn bush, listening to the rumbling of his empty stomach, he became ravenous. The second day he was forced to chew bark, and ate some green herbage and shoots he found by a brook. A wave of fear swept over him as the vastness of the silent world about pressed down upon his twisted back, emphasizing his horrible loneliness, his utter insignificance facing the black unplumbed depths of the starry sky.

Only a terrified hope in a beneficent Kismet gave him courage to trudge onward on the morning of the third day. It was not because he was traversing a desert that he starved; for there were wild animals, and brilliantly plumaged birds all about; but he had no way of laying hands upon them and converting them into food.

On the morning of the third day he came to the edge of a grove on a flowery hillside, where a *tokhul* stood with sheep and cattle grazing near it; and children playing about. At sight of it, Achmed sat down tremulously and wept; but when he recovered his strength he went forward calling out in the name of God to give him a mouthful of food.

The children set up a chorus of yells. A tall Shoan came out and stood watching him, with a rifle in his hand. He was slim and handsome, not unlike a Somali, but with the heavier shoulders and neck and the suggestion of reserve strength that characterize the Abyssinian. Behind him came his wife, buxom, light in color, her short, neat hair tight plaited in narrow parallel lines, bubbling with good nature and the opulent good will of a happy, healthy body.

Even in his misery Achmed felt that he could adore her.

Doubts at rest, the Abyssinian came forward, exclaiming at Achmed's suffering.

"Magda," he called. "He is a guest and needs food quickly."

Magda looked at the hunchback with pity; she swiftly filled a leather mug with honey colored *tedj* and handed it to him.

"God will reward you," gasped Ach-

med, lifting it to his lips and draining it.

His senses reeling with its potency, he slumped down on a stool, laughing weakly, while the children, gathering about with thumbs in their mouths, watched with large glistening eyes. Murmuring with sympathy, Magda brought some figs, which Achmed ate ravenously, apologizing.

"It is nothing," said Magda, lightly touching his twisted back. "We will gladly kill a sheep."

Her husband had already caught a fowl and struck off its head, tossing the flapping body to the children, who began to pluck it. Within fifteen minutes Achmed was devouring the chicken with some soft *chupatties* and another beaker of *tedj*.

Once more his soul was his own!

Magda and her husband urged him to stay with them and get back his strength; but in the presence of this magnificent woman a curious pride filled his wizened body. He accepted some coffee and flour they offered him, then went on his way strengthened and refreshed, his heart burning with gratitude.

HITHERTO Achmed's life had been somewhat the life of a sneak—a whiner, a dodger of blows, one who begged for favors, or slunk off on questionable errands. Though a thousand times he had fingered the sharp *jambia* tucked into his belt, and ten thousand times his bony fingers had tensed convulsively on his long wooden staff, he had never struck a vicious blow in his own defense in all his life. He murmured more "Thanks to God!" and "In the Name of God!" than any ten other Moslems—trusting God to see him through the difficulty.

One morning as he rose from his prostration, squatting awkwardly back on his haunches, raising both hands to the sides of his face, eyes raptly closed, he heard a rustling in the dry edge of the jungle, and opened his eyes to see swaying before him in the gray jungle grass a specter of death in the form of a twelve-foot cobra. Without conscious thought, Achmed's hand dropped to the staff that lay alongside him; he lifted it so that both hands grasped it firmly by the end; it whistled in a dazzling arc, and caught the cobra two spans beneath the head. Instantly Achmed was on his feet, beating frenziedly at the writhing coils. He had killed the killer. For an instant he stood, with stick poised, trembling violently in a profuse perspiration. Then he relaxed and looked about him with a self-satisfied smirk. Dropping once more to his knees, raising his hands aloft, he intoned in shrill, quavering accents—

"God is great—and to be glorified!"

That afternoon Achmed became aware that life along the trail was again becoming active. Armed men on sweating horses burst through the brush, dashing by him, without word of greeting; or cursing him as their mounts reared and danced into the thorns, startled by the unkempt twisted figure of the Arab. By the next day, after a night of continual movement, and the sound of rushing horses, Achmed began to suspect that he was in the midst of some great movement.

Achmed reached the top of the trail in the cool still air of evening. An angry desert sun was sinking down into the valley of the Nile in a flood of crimson and purple. Long blue shadows stretched around him, softening for a few moments the brown and gray of the rocky slopes. He was inexpressibly weary; his breathing was labored; and in his ears there was a roaring and humming that seemed to him the last protest of his reeling senses.

His *footah* was stained brown and green and spotted with blood from his thorn torn flesh. His voluminous turban that had been blanket, tent and parasol for him, seemed grotesquely to press his thin bearded face down upon his bony chest. He leaned on his staff, rocking uncertainly on weary feet. Then for an instant the red of the setting sun was reflected in his mournful, deep set

eyes, giving them the angry glow that appears in the eyes of a mongoose upon discovering a snake.

At first there seemed nothing to excite the hunchback. Rather, his weariness should have pressed him to the ground. But his head was lifting to a strange thrill of excitement; for it had dawned upon him suddenly that the roaring and humming in his ears was not caused by the beating of blood in throat and temples. Drums were throbbing on the air.

He limped cautiously forward, his scraggly beard thrust outward, until the trail dropped away into a great bare valley in the heart of which lay the village of Dessie.

A desolate, forlorn village, ordinarily, composed of a scattering of *tokhuls,* made of mud plastered stone and high conical thatch, Dessie offered a marketplace for the surrounding tribes. The bare, beaten open spaces afforded accommodation for thousands of horses and donkeys, cattle and sheep, and the tents of the herdsmen. The marketplaces and the sides of the hills swarmed with horses and mules; a bleating and lowing of goats and cattle rose through the still air. The sight of thousands upon thousands of white clad men, moving restlessly about like excited ants, sent a thrill of apprehension up Achmed's spine. The humming that rose was like the humming of angry bees. The throbbing of the terrible drums unnerved him.

Instinctively crouching down, Achmed sank to one side to hide behind a rock. He heard a rushing sound behind him. Twisting about, he recoiled with arm and staff held over his head to defend himself. But again he was destined to be tumbled into the dust. This time he did not dare rise, but looked from under the curve of his arm with terrified eyes, bleating shrilly:

"In the name of God, don't stab me! I am innocent!"

Three Tigrean horsemen were looking down at him with black, unblinking eyes, their lances reaching tentatively toward his body as it twisted and shrank away from the polished tips.

"*Hudha,*" said one in Arabic. "He has the actions of a spy."

"Name of God! No, no, no!" protested Achmed.

"What are you doing here?"

Achmed was too weak, too utterly weary to attempt subterfuge. He gasped out—

"I am a messenger of Ras Omar."

The scouts began to laugh in unison, lifting their lances.

"In that case," said the leader, "we'll take you to your master. You Moslems travel too slowly. Hold up your hands."

Having seen hands stricken off for less than nothing, Achmed whimpered, thrusting his hands under his armpits, his thin arms pressed desperately to his chest.

"Lift them," said the horseman. "I only want to lead you into camp."

He struck Achmed lightly with the butt of his lance, and the hunchback rose to his feet, sighing, thrusting his hands out nervously. A noose was slipped over them, and fastened to the saddle. The horses were swung into the trail. A minute later they were clattering and slipping down the sharp slope into Dessie.

Achmed leaped and dodged and ran, clutching at the stirrup in terror, expecting every second to trip and be dragged among the sharp edged stones, until they cut him loose, a broken carcass. But he was still upright when they reached the level. In a red daze of fear and exhaustion, hanging on to the horse's flank, Achmed saw hundreds of black faces, with snowy, flashing teeth, crowding in to look at him. The pungent smell of dust and horses, of human sweat, wood smoke and frying food—the unforgettable smell of a great encampment—pressed in on him.

There was an uproar of sound and confusion. With rattling throat and gasping lungs, the hunchback held on, half running, half dragged straight through the yelling, laughing crowd. Only once did the horsemen turn aside.

This was at the sound of a tinkling bell, and a toneless voice, calling, "Unclean! Unclean!" Achmed closed his eyes as they dragged him past a faceless thing, squatting in the dust, calling plaintively to the lusty world of wild eyed men that swirled about it.

IN THE crowd, through bloodshot eyes, Achmed saw a turban and cried out in a shrill voice—

"God is great and to be glorified!"

A Moslem shouted with violence:

"What is this? In the name of God, can this be permitted to a true Moslem?" All at once there were more turbans. The three horsemen were forced to a halt. They sat their horses calmly, insolently.

"We have brought this scarecrow into camp, claiming he is a Moslem, a messenger of Ras Omar."

"God knows," shrieked Achmed desperately.

An Arab officer, clean, trim in his white cloak, looking for all the world like a handsome young Italian, rode into the protesting crowd, until his eyes fell on the hunchback.

"Ah," he exclaimed. "It is Achmed. Peace, friends, I will be responsible for him. He is truly a messenger. Peace to you, Achmed."

"We thought he was a spy," said the scout, reluctantly releasing his prisoner. "Go, Moslem, among your friends."

"May you burn!" cried Achmed frantically, staggering forward for the hand the Arab held out. Achmed seized it and covered it with kisses. "Prosperity to your house! Truly your father is blessed in this son!"

The officer smiled, murmuring—

"In the name of God!"

As the crowd continued to press in on them in the gathering darkness, the flames of the camp-fires suddenly dotted the purple shadowed hill like a sprinkling of red stars. There was a wildness in the scene that snapped the string of Achmed's hysteria.

"*Deen Mohammed! Deen Mohammed!*" he shrieked.

Before he could utter another gasp, several hands were pressed to his mouth. Furious voices whispered:

"Shut up, in the name of God, you dog! These Christians are not enemies. They are allies!"

"Allies?" Achmed managed to gasp.

"Yes, you ass! Allies! Tomorrow we march south with them to conquer all Abyssinia. We are going to take Addis Abeba. Then you may, indeed, cry *'Deen Mohammed!'*"

They fed Achmed lavishly with roast mutton and millet. Half starved, his thin hand trembled under the ablution, before he seized the crackling meat oozing incredibly delicious juices which he sopped up with flapjacks. Afterward he sipped cup after cup of sirupy Harrari coffee, flavored with cardamom, his eyes half closed as the divine nectar rolled over his tongue and down his parched throat, reviving him, clarifying his brain, bringing back his courage.

Soon he caught the spirit of the camp, thrilling with a frantic enthusiasm. A lust for warfare rose exuberantly with the unceasing, maddening throb of the drums of Wallo. All through the night, as Achmed slept with a *chamma* over his eyes, curled by the side of a camp-fire, he twitched and quivered as if the drums were fingers playing on raw flesh.

Achmed woke refreshed at the cry of a mollah calling the warriors to morning prayer. He ate again and felt the thin blood, in the cold morning air, singing in his veins. Before he rose from his haunches the white cotton tents in the valley and the hillsides had vanished; the milling, turbulent crowd, on foot, and on horses, mules, donkeys and camels, was streaming up the valley and over the hills. The army was on the march. How many, Achmed, trained to spy, could only guess. Perhaps forty thousand armed men, with a small proportion of camp followers.

There were no wagon trains, no con-

voys of supplies. Every man carried his own food—chunks of cooked meat, small bags of meal, leather bottles full of *tedj* or water, small bags of coffee and spices. Every warrior was his own arsenal. They carried rifles, pistols, scimitars and lances, with bandoleers and belts studded with cartridges for many makes of gun. Achmed counted six machine guns on mules; undoubtedly there were others.

In a cloud of dust a large cortège of mounted warriors trotted by; women called out quaveringly; naked boys ran along, large eyes rolling with admiration, mouths agape. This was the cortège of the commander-in-chief. There was the King of Wallo himself on Roll-them-up, his stern, handsome bearded face, black and composed. A riffling of fury, like prickly heat, ran up Achmed's spine and over his twisted back; he snatched at the flies clouding before his greasy beard, and began to curse shrilly.

Almost before Achmed realized it, the valley had been miraculously cleared, as a village street is cleared after the passing of a circus parade, with all its garish turmoil, all the bleating uproar of clowns and animals and the wailing calliope. Hastily wrapping the remains of his food in a corner of the cotton *chamma* that had been given him, he set out reluctantly to follow the lines of warriors as they streamed over the broken horizon southward.

The hunchback's crippled condition now made him useless as a messenger; for in war a man must be upright in his body, fierce and virile for the sacrifice. He tarried with the camp followers, begging food successfully, now that there was the promise of plenty in the wake of a devastating army.

On the third day, Achmed actually captured a stray donkey and thenceforth fiercely maintained himself as a fighting man. What a difference it made to ride on the willing back of a strong beast, looking down with contempt upon the trudging world about you! Twice efforts were made to bully him from his mount. But the furious violence of his maledictions, the startling sinisterness of his thin outthrust face and burning eyes, while he seized convulsively the curved steel of the *jambia* that projected above his belt, turned the marauders aside with childish laughter. These triumphs made Achmed feel the mounting egotism of a conqueror. He, too, would share in putting the world underfoot.

He soon learned at camp-fires of crackling aromatic thorn under the canopies of mimosa trees that the army that spread before him was advancing in definite order.

Ras Mikael marched in the center, conspicuous in the encampments by the green color of his tent of cotton sheeting. On the left flank was Ras Omar, with fifteen or twenty thousand Moslems. On the right flank to the westward was Ras Gebri-Christos!

"Aha," commented Achmed, with a knowing smirk, "it becomes a family affair! This Gebri-Christos, who is named after your Prophet, is the son-in-law of Ras Mikael!"

"We will say nothing concerning your ignorance about our divine Lord," volunteered a tall Tigrean, "though under other circumstances it would give me pleasure to maim you, if it is possible, for a phrase like that. But, in order to lighten the other ignorance of those who fight with us, no, he is not Ras Mikael's son-in-law!"

"He *was* his son-in-law!" shouted a woman from the shadowy edge of the circle, with a loud ribald laugh.

The Tigrean looked at her over his shoulder with contempt; but she added gaily:

"This Gebri is not unlike a Moslem. He grew tired of Mikael's daughter and sent her home. And was her father the king furious?"

"A family quarrel," suggested Achmed, conciliatory; but he decided uneasily that perhaps his place was more secure behind the Moslem army, and he swung to the left.

SOON they were in the country of the Menzies. African hell flamed across that ill fated land. The countryside was swept with sword and flame. Everything in the path of the human locusts was destroyed. Villages were surrounded, and all living creatures put to the sword or destroyed in the blazing *tokhuls*. The smell of burned flesh stuck in Achmed's nostrils. Like the smell of blood to animals, it startled him, terrified him, drove him to madness.

After the battle of Ankober, where Ras Mikael's army annihilated a force of many thousand Christian Shoans from Addis Abeba that were sent against him, there was a surplus of weapons; and Achmed hitched a scimitar to his belt, feeling fiercely that he was actually a warrior too. The victory inflamed the entire host, and there was a more rapid surge forward.

They came now to the high rolling, meadow-like country of the central highlands, carpeted in golden mustard and purple wild peas. The smell of crushed lush grass rose fragrantly about them. Creamy clouds rolled on the distant, lavender hued horizon. The inhabitants of this country had fled southward, driving their cattle before them; food became scarcer.

It was necessary now for Achmed to forage more adroitly. One day he came upon the hot ruins of a *tokhul* and began distastefully to investigate. As he prowled around he experienced a curious sense of reminiscence. All at once he was petrified, staring with bulging eyes and open mouth, arms outspread and fingers distended. The figures scattered on the ground before him were familiar. There, surely, was what remained of the woman, Magda, who had befriended him!

With a wild cry, the hunchback fled grotesquely, tears streaming down his gaunt cheeks. Over and over again, to calm the tumultuous panic in his bosom, he panted:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate on the Day of Judgment . . . In the Name of God, the Compassionate . . . "

Two days later the army came to a halt.

A broad gentle valley spread before them, with a low hill in front of the forces of Ras Omar. Ras Mikael's green tent was pitched on a hill to the rear of the center. Somewhere in the golden haze to the west Ras Gebri-Christos had encamped. No guide was necessary to explain the sudden halt; for across the meadows, on the opposite side of the valley, were innumerable dots of black and white, like mixed flocks of sheep and goats strung out in curiously stable alignment. There stood an appallingly large host of warriors— waiting! Before the day passed, that silent army was variously estimated between fifty and a hundred thousand warriors. And there were machine guns and cannon.

For two days the armies faced each other, while messengers passed back and forth, negotiating, seeking an armistice, an end to the fratricidal bloodshed. In that time the invading warriors, proud and insolent with conquest, learned, with a sudden dampening of enthusiasm, that the chieftains across the way were the most famous warriors of Abyssinia.

In the center was the giant minister of war himself, Fitaorari Apte Georgios; while behind him in direct support was the fearless young lance who had driven the deposed prince into the Somali wilderness, the regent, Ras Tafari Makonnen. Old Haile Georgios, a fire-eater who had distinguished himself in the war against Italy, faced Ras Omar with a force hastily recruited from mixed contingents that had rushed to the defense of Addis Abeba, lying over the hills only a day's ride away. The left flank of the Christian Shoans to the west was commanded by the brilliant and dashing Ras Lagaba Bayana.

There was little dissimilarity in the costumes of either army; Roman togas of American cotton sheeting, with black woolen cloaks, draped over white cotton

riding breeches; sandals, tight turbans or broad brimmed felt hats; bandoleers and belts of cartridges; rifles, scimitars, revolvers, lances, round buffalo hide shields heavily embossed with metal. Somewhere, Achmed learned, there was a battery of field guns.

Achmed was nervous, distraught, hungry.

Now that the army had come to a halt, the resources of the countryside were soon eaten up. The hunchback was no longer welcome at firesides, to share in the roast meat that had been so plentiful along the murderous trail southward. And that host across the way filled him with ominous dread. The conquest of the world had really seemed easy when they swept through the Menzies. The sharp roaring battle at Ankober, when six thousand Shoans were overwhelmed and swept from the path of conquest in a few hours, had been an augury of unchecked victory. But what a difference between an advance guard of six thousand, and a body of eighty thousand of Abyssinia's best warriors?

Achmed sat on a remote hill behind the lines, speculating dubiously on his prospects. There was a calm peacefulness to the meadowland rolling away in all directions, which, with its thatched cottages sending up thin wisps of smoke in the cool evening air, would have suggested the homeland to many a European. It needed only the tolling of the angelus from a church tucked away in a dell, or the melancholy clunking of cowbells to establish the illusion.

The air was clean and fresh. Achmed might well have been thinking edifying thoughts; instead he was thinking of meat; and instead of the sound of the angelus, he felt pressing on his chest the throb of drums. A battle seemed imminent. The horse tenders and foragers had drawn nervously closer to their commands.

All at once it occurred to Achmed that it was not impossible for Ras Mikael's army to be defeated. What would happen to him if those eighty thousand warriors on that far hillside should come roaring and screaming across the meadow destroying all before them?

Achmed was glad he had the donkey.

Moving far to the rear, he found a tree as darkness descended. Not trusting the camp followers who were prowling about like hyenas sniffing for a kill, he removed the donkey's saddle and made a nest for himself in the tree where he settled himself for the night, slowly chewing a cold peppery flapjack.

It was a starry night, cold almost to freezing. Achmed did not sleep well. All his thoughts turned inward, and he groaned and sighed and cursed with cold and misery. At about three o'clock in the morning a faint sputter of a rifle fire broke out toward the east, where Ras Omar's Moslems were in camp.

"In the Name of God!" exclaimed Achmed, almost falling to the ground.

As he twisted his thin neck, so that his head stuck out of the foliage like a startled hamadryad baboon, he felt a vibration in the air that was at first like the low growl of far distant thunder. But as it rose in an endless roar the hunchback's hair stood on end. The war drums were rolling . . .

ACHMED clambered down to the ground shivering with cold and excitement, wondering which way to turn. All at once he realized that his donkey had gone. Without so much as a gasp, he scrambled up the tree again, and sat there biting his fingernails, eyes as large and lustrous as a lemur's, every sense alert.

Flickering lights etched the blue darkness that stretched before Achmed in a dark wall under the stars. There were no flares or star shells to illumine the scene, no rush and clanking of mechanical equipment behind the lines, no rising, appalling detonation of big guns and the chatter and sighing of shells passing overhead to form the steel cataract of a barrage. Achmed was virtually in a wilderness where the throbbing of the

drums might well have been the reverberating belching of well fed lions. There was indeed a grave possibility that a lion had removed his faithful donkey. But Achmed knew too well that the flickering lights in the dark blue haze of the night, and the murmurous hubbub rising above the roar of the drums like the babble of wild geese flying high overhead sounding through the pulsating roar of a heavy surf, meant that hot blood was staining the fragrant meadows below him.

How insignificant he seemed now, whimpering and sniffling in his tree!

He dared not run away in the darkness, for he feared the lions and hyenas that hung on the skirts of the destructive army. Oh, where was his donkey?

Faint, ululating screams came thinly through the night. For awhile Achmed heard the bang of guns, but this soon ceased. Faint ripping sounds he identified as machine guns; but the great volume of rifle fire made a continuous incredible crackling not unlike the crackling of dry papyrus stalks snapping under the roaring flames of a bush fire.

Soon he heard whimpers in the darkness about, the wild clatter of hoofs of runaway horses. Once he heard the nervous twittering moan of a hyena. Time passed into hours, and still the fight went on, still the uproar vibrated through the stillness of the night. The cold night air now carried back to Achmed the pungent smell of powder. A faint gray cloud was perceptible in the fading darkness over the valley.

Excitement began to warm the hunchback. Since the flood had not turned back on him, he realized that Ras Mikael must be winning. Clambering down from his tree, he began to move forward, uncertainly, nervously, but with the persistence of an inquisitive impalla.

He had not gone far when he came upon two wounded men being cared for by a soft voiced woman. One of them had lost his left arm from the slash of a scimitar; he was holding the stump at the elbow with no more expression on his face than a puckered frown of worriment. The other had bullet wounds in his body; he would hold his breath determinedly, then explode with a sudden mingling of prayers and curses. There was little the woman could do; she was putting leaves on the wounds and binding them with pieces torn from her *chamma,* murmuring prayers to the Virgin and St. Michael.

Achmed's purpose cooled at this sight of blood, intensified by the orange glow of the little fire beside which the men lay.

"Who is winning?" asked Achmed.

"Who cares?" said the man with the abbreviated arm, sighing.

"You are a Moslem," said the woman, without altering the tone of her voice. "Go over there to the left. Those devils are almost in Addis Abeba by this time. The report is that Ras Omar's horsemen have torn through old Haile Georgios' men like buffalos stampeding through sheep!"

"In the Name of God!" exclaimed Achmed proudly. "I have been searching everywhere for Ras Omar. I serve him!"

"Who cares?" said the man with the stump.

The other suddenly burst out into hysterical shrieks; and seizing a knife, he threw it at Achmed, who leaped awkwardly aside and ran into the shadows protesting shrilly. When finally he halted, he was suddenly overwhelmed with shame. The contempt in the face of the woman, his fear of the broken and dying men, brought back strangely enough the words of his friend, the debtor-prisoner, Georgios, "You haven't got the strength or courage to stand up before any man!" With self-pity the hunchback began to cry, a tremulous whimpering.

Hot tears ran down into his forlorn beard. He tried to justify himself. The sight of the poor murdered woman, Magda, and her family who had befriended him, came back to him. Who was responsible for all this? Why did

he march with this army anyway? The army of the King of Wallo!

"May he burn!" wailed Achmed. "May he eat dirt!"

It began to rain, and he felt dumbly that that must put an end to the battle, but as he looked up, wiping his nose, he was electrified to see that the graying sky was still sprinkled with stars. It was raining bullets. The thunder was still the unbroken roar of the war drums. He was caught now. There was no way out.

Dawn was already touching the hills; a wisp of lavender lay across the eastern sky. The vague stirrings that he had felt around him began to assume the shape of figures. As it lightened he began running here and there like a terrified rabbit, caught unaccountably in city traffic. He babbled prayers as he ran; but his prayers were lost in the hysterical shouts about him:

"St. Michael! . . . St. George! . . . God with us! . . . "

Frenzy taught Achmed the technique of falling down at the sight of floundering horsemen, in a huddled lump, like the blood stained lumps inert or writhing that were scattered all about like recumbent sheep upon a hillside. Horses stepped over him; arms were too weary to thrust a lance unnecessarily.

When dawn suddenly came upon the world, flooding the crushed and bleeding meadowland with a clear lemon colored light, all action in the vicinity of Achmed had ceased. As the sun rose clearer, his sharpened faculties began to comprehend the scene as it stretched before him in a bright panorama.

He was on the forward slope of the northern side of the vale, at a point near the base of the right flank. On a slight eminence behind him and slightly toward the east was the green tent of Ras Mikael. The King of Wallo was there, seated on his war horse, Roll-them-up, with a bodyguard of about a hundred superbly mounted *rases* and warriors. The figure of Ras Mikael was unmistakable. White and black on his gray horse, the bearded figure had greater dignity and certainly greater fierceness than that of Bonaparte at Austerlitz. His grimness was lightened by a look of satisfaction.

THE members of his bodyguard were shouting, calling out to each other with sharp exclamations of enthusiasm, laughing with relieved hysteria. Mounted couriers rode like devils across the broken field. The uproar of the battle continued with unabated élan; but the action had pressed far into the Christians' line.

It was obvious to Achmed, who was a master in the art of spying, that Ras Omar had indeed turned back old Haile Georgios; and the advance camp of the Christians had been driven back with great slaughter into the camp of Ras Tafari, who commanded the reserve. The field to the left and center had been swept before them. Only a hill to the eastward held out, enfilading Ras Omar with machine gun fire.

Ras Mikael scorned to hold a reserve in support. His entire force was thrown into impetuous action, staking all on the fierceness of the attack. Only on his right flank had the action seemed to die down. More and more Ras Mikael was turning his attention in this direction. Achmed could not figure out what was happening there; for though Ras Gebri-Christos, the rebellious son-in-law of the king, had advanced his line to meet the defending Christians, there was little fighting going on. Instead the lines kept thinning out towards the west, as if each sought to outflank the other, as Ras Omar, the Moslem, had outflanked old Haile Georgios.

Achmed wanted to run. But he knew perfectly that a bullet or a lance thrust would quickly stop a runaway. He longed to be behind Ras Omar's men. But there was that hill bristling with flame and steel, with the attackers, both on foot and horse, falling like red wheat beneath a sickle.

Still he could not remain squatted there in full sight of the king's bodyguard. The quiet western flank seemed now his only hope. As inconspicuously as possible, therefore, walking and falling and rising again, Achmed slowly worked his way toward the misty west behind Ras Gebri-Christos' line. The sun was now well up. With the swiftness of African drama, the air changed from chill to hot. The shafts of sunlight pierced Achmed's *footah*, and made him writhe with prickly heat. He was intensely thirsty; but he shuddered at the thought of drinking from the bloody stream that ran between Silti and Koromasch.

He limped on, leaning heavily on his staff. His nerves had become dulled almost to apathy. The piercing tumult of the battle no longer frightened him. All he felt was increasing resentment against the King of Wallo, sitting on his superb horse back there, looking out across the world he planned to conquer —lord of all creation!

Achmed crawled onward, snarling.

After awhile he noticed that the haze he had observed was not mist, but a cloud of dust. Horsemen! Thousands of them were coming in from the west. He stopped agape. What was this? He knew perfectly well that the King of Wallo had no horsemen there, and yet they were behind the line of Ras Gebri-Christos! Had the Christians tricked them? Was this a flanking movement by enemy horsemen?

Achmed pressed his thin hand against his open mouth, stifling a yell of terror; for he was directly in the path of this charging cavalry. Lethargy passed in an instant. He darted back and forth, moaning, wondering which way to turn.

By this time Ras Mikael and his bodyguard had observed the approaching force. The laughter had ceased. Though the battle before them was going on with increasing fury; though the sounds of combat still rose in roars and piercing shrieks; though the thunder of the drums rolled over all—there was a breathless silence in the king's bodyguard.

It would be difficult for any one even to guess at the conflict of thoughts and emotions in the king's mind, and the confusing conjectures in the minds of his attendants. All of them knew the gossip and scandal that surrounded Gebri-Christos and his discarded wife, the daughter of Ras Mikael; they knew the hatred and fury that the king had once expressed toward his insolent and strong minded son-in-law; they had wondered only that the two had been able to come together again in an alliance upon which so much depended.

Now the doubts flared up anew. Either Gebri-Christos had planned all along to ruin his hot headed father-in-law; or, at the last moment, during the three days of parleying that preceded the battle of Silti-Koromasch, he had time to reconsider his rash alliance and come privately to an agreement with his old friends and fellow Christians who were facing him. Whatever led to his decision, it seemed fairly apparent that Gebri-Christos had been withholding his attack, stalling along the right flank with full knowledge that a new Christian body of horse was coming in from the west—either to reenforce him if he decided to about face and overthrow the king, or to attack him in the rear if he delayed compromising with the enemy who faced him.

Ras Mikael turned the beautiful head of Roll-them-up toward the west. Achmed dared not turn back now. In his frenzy he observed that the force of Ras Gebri-Christos had stopped all pretense of fighting. It was, in fact, turning toward him also as if its leaders had come to an understanding with the enemy. Dared Achmed rush toward them, hoping for safety in their midst?

It appeared now that the approaching horsemen were not charging upon the battlefield. They were advancing at a controlled trot. A small group at their head rode more briskly until they could be recognized. One of Ras Mikael's

advancing lieutenants suddenly shrieked—

"It's Ras Gebri-Christos himself!"

The bodyguard came to an uncertain halt, horses dancing and pirouetting. A look of fury swept over Ras Mikael's face as he continued steadily on, staring with fierce concentration at the leader of the approaching horsemen. Obviously they were ill at ease, still fearful of the terrible unconquerable commander who rode toward them. Ras Mikael did not hear the broken chorus behind him:

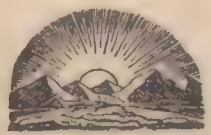
"Treachery! Treachery!"

All at once he loosed his revolver. Roll-them-up leaped forward at a bound. The king fired shot after shot at his treacherous son-in-law. Had he killed him, it is conceivable that he might instantly have assumed command of that host of horsemen and thrown them victoriously into the battle. It is literally possible that the fate of great nations hung in the balance of his stirrups. He still might have become conqueror of the world.

But at that moment there rose crookedly in his path an inconspicuous figure, animated by a purpose even more to the point than his own; for in the heart of the confusion, with his glowing eyes fixed only on the King of Wallo, Achmed the hunchback was again exactly in the position he had occupied the night the king thrust him with his foot into the dust, shaming him, polluting him; and ringing in his ears again was the echo of the scornful phrase—

"You haven't got the strength or courage to stand up before any man!" . . .

With one frantic blow of his long staff, Achmed the hunchback struck the King of Wallo from his saddle, sending him head first to the earth—biting the dust!



A Story of the Zeppelin Raiders

VISIT IN RED

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

THE long August day was dropping its bloated sun below the far horizon, off toward England. Five Zeppelins of Imperial Germany, hurrying to make the most of the short summer night, were on their way to England. At 15,000 feet, the cruising altitude of this west-bound quintet, that bloated sun in the west was all that was left. They flew by that sun, more or less, so they didn't like to see it go. Three hours more of North Sea travel remained before the landfall on Britain; and a bit of light along the way was a thing to be desired. There'd be a moon later that night, at 10:40, and the interval of darkness would crowd them hard. These five ships were manned by nervous crews. They were men attempting the admittedly impossible: a belated 1918 raid on London.

The five had set out with the usual faulty meteorological information. Germany's airships had always raided under just such faulty data. The weather comes from the west, off there toward England,

and beyond. Germany's west ended at the Western Front, and she had no way of learning what the elements were brewing to the west of that Front. But her airship crews always found out—too late. Now, at 15,000 feet, these five raiders were cruising across a solid sea of clouds. Clouds that rolled their fleecy top sides to every far horizon, and beyond. Those clouds rolled up to 12,000 or 13,000 feet. And they went down all the way, down to the North Sea, and down into France and Belgium. Also, and worse, it was raining in England. But the five ships carried on, for they must do that. It was up to them to prove that the sun of the airship had not set. They were out to prove that the hour had not struck for lighter-than-air.

Of course that wasn't the idea, officially. This was just the usual raid, a military move. But it was months now, four to be exact, since the great bags had attempted this thing. The great Captain Strasser had led that other raid, back in April; and the same great Captain Strasser was aboard the *L-70* now. The *L-70* was flagship of the five. She was under the command of Captain Lossnitzer.

Captain Strasser was head of the German naval airship service. He was also the brain of the service; and the spirit too. Strasser believed in airships. These five craft, moving high across the sky, were more than just airships to him. Strasser still told the High Command that the thing could be done. There must always be one man who will say "this thing can be done!" So it was really against the incredulity of his nation, an almost solid skepticism, that he fought.

Airships, too many Zeppelins, had fallen prey to enemy guns. Germany was just about off those big things. But Strasser was adamant. The faith of the man was superb. And the personal bravery of the man was on a par with his faith. Well, he'd show them! He'd show the world; for the world was always watching . . . Poor, brave Strasser! His number was up. And the game he so aptly dealt was now too strongly bucked. Gone was the safety of such craft. And gone was the terror engendered by such craft. Perhaps it was good that Strasser was about to go; for a man is of little use when his banners are in the dust.

Behind the *L-70* flew, in V formation, the *L-65* and *L-53*, the *LZ* and the *LL-X*. The last named ship, the *LL-X*, was the very latest word in Zeppelins, a super ship. It had come out of the shops three days before this flight took off, and it held secrets that were world-beating. Perhaps war-winning too. Strasser, from the control car of the *L-70*, watched that *LL-X* more than he watched the course of any other craft. More, even, than he watched the hostile sky off the northern coast of Belgium. That is, during the first few hours of the cruise.

But it was a very good idea to watch that northern coast. In the old days, those first days of raiding, it didn't matter. But now, in '18, the Allied air forces had a habit of coming up off that coast. They came up in fast pursuit planes—Nieuports—Sop' Camels—S.E. 5's; small, fast ships that would make 20,000 feet. So the lighter-than-air crews watched their air. Far better that they watch that air than that they have all that air knocked from under them. And knocked from under by one small craft, manned by one small man—and two hot guns.

The last flush of the setting sun had gone from the sky ahead. With the going of that light went much of the danger to be expected from planes. So the big five churned onward and west.

They weren't without worry, however. The barometer was low, and these ships were heavy in bombs and fuel. A low barometer meant that much of their climbing ability would be curtailed. And they would need every last foot of ceiling when those searchlights, guns and brave flying men of England began reaching for them. 25,000 feet, under

the right conditions, was easy for these Zeppelins in 1918. Moreover, no ship or gun could reach them there. But with a low barometer—well, the hours ahead were surely shrouded in darkness. Anything might happen. So the five ships pushed on, for Strasser was in the control car of one.

The Captains Strasser and Lossnitzer watched the barometer fall to a new low. At least it was a new low for German raiding. And the thin air accompanying such a fall was nothing short of tragic. Still, thin air for airships was just as thin for airplanes; so there the score was even. But not so where anti-aircraft guns were concerned. There was the rub! Those guns, and their crews, were growing outrageously clever and deadly. Recent Gotha raids, since the last Zep raids, proved this. And there were more searchlights too, plus more and better means of airship detection. No use talking, it was an ill-starred mission. But Strasser and Lossnitzer stood behind the quiet helmsman, looking only ahead.

Nine o'clock had arrived and departed without event. When another half hour had passed, the British coast just north of Yarmouth had almost been reached. The airships were climbing now, in an effort to reach a greater ceiling. 17,000 feet was their altitude when the towns of Mundesley and Cromer heard their motors at 9:45. It was then that the *L-70*'s radio spoke the other four craft for the last time. Only briefly did Strasser have the *L-70*'s radioman speak. He asked for a report on all four ships. All four flashed back their O.K. Strasser again was brief.

"Go your way and raid."

The five broke formation. London was the objective of all, but the objective must be reached from different directions; and at different times. Five must not fly close together. Nor four, three, or two.

The coast was under clouds. But here and there, where those clouds tossed aside, careless lights came into view. Those careless lights were eagerly sought and closely studied. The *L-70* turned a bit south, at 9:50, when small Walsingham betrayed its position in such a manner. However, Walsingham doused its lights, and the *L-70* turned east toward Norwich.

During that push on to Norwich the *L-70* picked up a brief, enthusiastic flash from the *LL-X*. Captain Techner, the very young and very rash commander of the new craft, wished to inform Captain Strasser that the super ship had reached an altitude of 22,000 feet.

Strasser and those in the control car of the *L-70* enthused with young and very rash Captain Techner. There was safety—22,000 feet; and this in thin air. It was very satisfying. The *LL-X* was certainly a fine craft. Its new secrets were good secrets; and they'd be good news for the High Command.

Captain Strasser, of all men of the mission, was most concerned. This had been intended as a test hop for the *LL-X*. Truth of the matter was, Captain Strasser hadn't even intended that the ship should raid. But he had made certain promises to young Techner. They were really unofficial promises. He had told Techner that the *LL-X* could raid only under one condition. That one condition was that the new craft should reach the coast of England without the least shadow of trouble: motor trouble, control trouble, ballast trouble, or any of those many troubles that kept a Zep crew ever on the alert. And it was because of all this that Captain Strasser traveled aboard the older ship, the *L-70*, instead of on the newer craft in which he was so much concerned. Strasser doubted that the new Zep could make the patrol without developing bugs. He knew that the *L-70*, under Lossnitzer, would be there at the finish; and there all the way. Lossnitzer was that kind of airman.

Captain Techner was that kind of airman too. Strasser had made of the nineteen-year-old a great airship commander. And a man is always intensely

interested in something that he has hand-raised. So, just as a passing remark, before Norwich came under, Captain Strasser told those close at hand that young Techner was in a class by himself.

Forthwith, in view of the fact that the Norwich business was now close at hand, Techner and his *LL-X* passed from consideration. The super ship was only one of five, all on duty bent. Of the other three, the *L-65* and *L-53* were working south and west. Cambridge and Herford were to note their passing. And the notes of that passage were to be left in blood. The *LZ* had carried on west, past Cromer and Blakeney, and toward The Wash. But at 9:59, just as Norwich was receiving the first of three bombs dropped, Strasser was handed another radio. It was from the *LZ*. Two of her motors had gone dead. She was turning, getting set to run for home.

THE *L-70*, Norwich off its hands, was turning east and north again. Yarmouth, and the naval air station there could hear the motors of the *L-70* by then. English pilots, from that naval air station, were taking off. Nine ships in all took wing. It was a horrible sky; and only the brave would tackle such a detail. But it was all in the night's work for these so-called home guard men of the Royal Flying Corps. It was the nightly dish for them; and no words on white paper can depict the hell they faced in such overcast, storm filled skies. They flew there; and they died there. Too many died there.

Among the nine planes to rise out of Yarmouth was one in the hands of Major Cadbury. It was a D.H.4, with a Captain Leckie holding down the rear seat as observer. Here was a brave brace of men. They went up and up, hearing nothing above the roar of their own loud motor, and seeing little beyond the extremities of their own wings. Higher and higher they went, pointing that climbing nose at the very ceiling of a D.H. Around them, here and there—God alone knew where!—other ships climbed and pushed ahead; and it was surely a detail that called for men.

Powerful searchlights stabbed the canopy above, swung across the sky, darted here and there, occasionally hesitating to hold some vagrant cloud that looked mighty like a Zep. With the first coming of those powerful fingers of piercing light, Strasser and the commander of the *L-70* put their heads together. The great ship had an altitude reading of 17,500 feet. That was good, but was it enough?

The motors of the *L-70* were throttled very low, in order to hear. Then, a minute later, those motors were stopped; and the great craft was free ballooning. The roar of pounding, climbing motors now filled the ears of twenty-two listening Germans. It was a tight place.

17,500 feet? Not enough. These climbing planes would go very close to eighteen or nineteen thousand, even in thin air. Lossnitzer ordered two gasoline containers cut away. Then a new reading came to the altimeter, and the *L-70* was clawing for her very ceiling with all engines back on the job.

Machine gun men atop the long back were ready for action. From each power egg other gun muzzles bristled, and the nervous men of iron were ready for the party ahead. Here were the planes of 1918. These high flying planes had already bagged a few Zeps. This sky was to know an epic hour—with Strasserism against the world.

18,000 and 18,500 feet were registered on the *L-70*'s dial. But that was close to the limit. Other gasoline tanks could be dropped, and other means of jettison resorted to, but how was the commander of the *L-70* to know that the time for that had arrived? As far as he and the other men of the crew could tell, the great bulk of their silver ship had not been seen. No searching finger of light had reached it yet. And as for the rising airplanes, well not one out of a dozen pilots, in such skies, ever caught sight of the airships hunted.

Once more, at 10:05, the seven motors of the *L-70* were silenced. Once again all heads hung out from control car and power gondolas, with every ear strained. The hellish wail of climbing airplane motors was still there. But the ships carrying those laboring motors were no nearer than before. Fact is, they seemed to have misguessed the *L-70*'s actual position. It was with the thrill of real sportsmen that Strasser and Lossnitzer realized their craft was holding its own. They decided to allow the great ship to continue with its free ballooning for awhile, and . . .

A searchlight landed squarely upon the *L-70*. It held the long and lazy silver fish in broad daylight. Orders were sent to each power unit; and seven motors barked into action. That finger of light lost its victim. But the moment had been fatal. As the light swept back and forth, looking for the great ship again, its ray played, just for a flash, upon the wings of a plane. The men in the *L-70*'s control car saw that hostile ship. And they knew that the enemy pilot had seen the raider.

There, in that crowded moment, the radioman handed Strasser another note. The *LL-X* was reporting itself lost in clouds at 22,000 feet, and asking as to the condition of visibility at the lower level. Captain Strasser, using few words, told that radioman to flash back that visibility was good at the present level of the *L-70*. And now all attention centered on the enemy plane so close at hand.

Not all attention, however. Captain Strasser could not forget that the pride of the service, the *LL-X*, was in trouble. Lost. In clouds at 22,000 feet. Clouds! What wouldn't the *L-70* give for that refuge of clouds now? And there was another rub. The *L-70*, under normal air conditions, could make 22,000 feet, for the *L-70* was nearly as late a word in Zeps as the *LL-X*. Seven motors and 1800 horse power, that was her class. But now all that class was not quite class enough.

The stormy English night was now alive with flashing, slashing searchlights. To a certain extent the position of those many great lights gave the raiding airmen an idea of the coastline. And at 10:15 the *L-70* passed out to sea just west of Cromer. Strasser and company were not retreating however, for their general direction was still west. But they were entirely on the defensive, and pressed.

The airplane that had flashed in the searchlight's sharp glare was the D.H.4 of Major Cadbury. At that time, he was to tell later, the major's bulky, climbing craft was at 15,000 feet. The big bus was still winning altitude, but slowly. Major Cadbury and his rear-seat man, Leckie, spotted the prey at one and the same time. Then the searchlight's aid had passed; and the two heavier-than-air men were put to it to keep the Zep in view. That was difficult. Many were the airmen who had won just such a fleeting peek at the great enemy, only to lose him next minute. Those Zeps were big enough, but they had a weird way of mixing themselves with the passing clouds.

At 10:20 the great and the small were abeam. The D.H, though, was all of a thousand feet below the German. The guns of that silver raider had opened fire. It was at long range, to be sure. But with so many guns and gunners the sky dreadnaughts could afford to throw much stuff away.

The *L-70* was truly in the pan now. The English flyers saw her drop those glistening things from her belly; bombs being dumped. Bombs going by the board, not a-bombing, but for the sole purpose of lightening ship. Other gasoline tanks were cut away. The commander of the *L-70* knew now that the time for such drastic action had arrived. Captain Strasser, too, knew that this was the minute of acid test.

The English airmen, facing that fire from above, held their own fire and pushed on and up. That D.H. was standing on its tail and pawing for the

long shadow above. Said long shadow was slipping west, under full power, at better than seventy miles per hour. Time and again, taking the punishment from those aft guns of the Zep, the D.H.4 was hit, holed, and sorely harassed. Holding and following the swelled-up enemy in that cloud blown sky was no small job. A climbing plane can't be expected to run a race with a craft that is carrying on in normal line of flight.

More than once, during the minutes of chase, did that speeding *L-70* pass from Major Cadbury's view. But never for a moment did those German machine gunners let up; and the sky below and around the great length of keel was a lethal sky of flying slugs. However, being thankful for small favors, the English airmen, upon losing the Zep, could always find it again by the blinking of those same enemy machine guns. Fine guiding lights!

Aboard the *L-70* men who knew air realized that they were up against other men who knew air. Here were Englishmen who held their fire. That was important. It was important because the ruddy blinking and glare of an airplane man's own guns prevented his seeing the night target out front again. If the Englishmen had fired at long range, the *L-70* might now be in the clear. But the Germans watched that D.H. come closer and closer, ever climbing and laboring. It was five hundred feet away now, and never a single range finding shot from its guns.

Strasser, in that tight minute, stepped closer to the *L-70*'s radioman.

"Get the *LL-X*," he called. "Tell Captain Techner to remain at his greatest possible altitude. Say we are under fire."

Always, till the last, was that super Zeppelin uppermost in Captain Strasser's mind. Perhaps the *L-70* was doomed, but the *LL-X* must carry on. It must return to prove that the super ship's greater ceiling was its safeguard; and the safeguard of Zeppelin future.

The coast and the lights of Cromer, Blakeney, Wells and Burnham Market were now several miles south of the high battle position; and the many powerful searchlights ahead and along The Wash were forced to lay long, low beams in their efforts to put the *L-70* into broad daylight once more. The chase was leading into thicker English weather; and the moment of moments had arrived.

Major Cadbury had reached the *L-70*'s level. Then, with his plane's greater speed, he had circled wide and passed out front. Not too far front, for the prey could be easily lost. Once more, aboard the *L-70*, decisions were being made. Every last gasoline container that could be cut away was dropped. All tools and movable instruments were jettisoned. Food and water dropped. Boots and clothing. Blankets and hammocks. Now, at the last moment, even the aft machine guns were tossed from the windows of power eggs. And the great *L-70* fought for a few additional feet of life giving altitude. Altitude! The stuff by which things of air live.

Meanwhile Major Cadbury, with Observer Leckie keen for the kill, was making his turn, out front. It was a hard flown, flat and powerless turn. Gone was the air's action on control surfaces; and the piloting hand of the major seemed to feel no weight of stick. Thin air and a sapped motor's feeble aid; but the D.H.4 was still in the fight. Around floated the plane's blunt nose, and the brace of Englishmen once more sighted the round gray-black disk, that was the bow of the oncoming *L-70*. Cadbury was a few feet higher than the enemy. Forward over the bow and along the back, the topside German machine gunners were blazing out their last great try. Also, fire came blinking from both forward power eggs.

Flying level now, Major Cadbury dropped his ship's bow and let her ramble. In came the *L-70*. Hard on the nose Cadbury flew. To the *L-70*'s port

side Cadbury right ruddered his diving D.H, missing the cloud-pushing Zep bow by scant yards. Into that bow Captain Leckie fired, point blank. It was incendiary shot that found the mark. And with that one passing burst a mighty opening was blown through the skin of the German craft.

Portside guns ran the D.H. ragged as it swept past. Then Major Cadbury zoomed and turned. While he was in that turn the world went red. The mighty heat even reached the men in the plane; and the *L-70* was a mass of seething fire from bow to rudders. The Englishmen, circling wide of the falling mass, saw man after man—nearly the whole German crew—take the long jump. Anything to avoid that awful heat! An airman has no second choice when the Visit in Red arrives.

Somewhere on the water, ten miles northeast of Wells, was an oily area. Under that was the *L-70;* and Strasser.

But the spirit of Captain Peter Strasser carried on. That spirit was still afloat, over Britain, in the *L-65* and *L-53*. And high in the clouds, still lost, was the *LL-X*. Maybe Captain Strasser merely passed from the *L-70* to the *LL-X;* who knows?

THE *LL-X* had cruised west and north beyond The Wash. Boston had heard the passing of its motors. Then the alert at Lincoln had doused all lights. A little later, Mansfield caught the drone of idled power. The drone remained. Observers on the ground guessed that the airship was circling. It was, for Captain Techner was lost. So during the hour that followed, many points on the ground noted the passing of that ship high above. Heard it, but never saw it.

Then at 10:40 the moon started on its tour of duty. That moon came faintly through the layer of clouds that canopied the 22,000-foot altitude of the *LL-X*. The moon gave young and rash Techner his bearings. It also restored a certain buoyancy to all aboard the super ship. They took on new life; and went ahead doing things.

Wireless communication between ships was dangerous and not often used, once the Zeps had arrived over England. Therefore, after that last flash from Strasser, Techner had refrained from using his wireless. But at eleven o'clock the operator of the *LL-X* had the *L-65* in communication. The latter ship was sending, trying to tell Captain Strasser that it, the *L-65,* had a fire aboard. It had been hit in the midship gondola, and the man who scored this second hit of the night was none other than the same Captain Leckie flying with the same Major Cadbury. The *L-65,* however, was not doomed. Leckie's gun jammed when he and Cadbury returned to press the fight. At 11:10 the wireless flashed out another report, saying that the fire had been extinguished. And the Englishmen, unable to clear the jam, had gone.

The *LL-X*'s wireless still refrained from sending. But that fire on the *L-65* had its effect on young and rash Techner. He decided to hold tenaciously to his 22,000 ceiling. It was exceptional and commendable procedure coming from such a young hotblood as the nineteen-year-old in question. In past raids—there over Britain, Paris and even Russia—the wild kid had never spared himself. He had played with searchlights. And he had ignored anti-aircraft fire. But that was before the Allied planes had reached new ceilings; and it was also before Allied planes began to use the latest in incendiary bullets.

Captain Techner had been away from the raids during the past ten months, owing to the fact that one raid over Paris had been very hard on his ship. But he had brought the ship back to crash on the German side of the lines. It was during his stay in the hospital that England's anti-airship defenses had grown up. To say the least, the doings of this full night were a great surprise for Strasser's prodigy. And again, Strasser,

or the respect for Strasser's interest in the *LL-X*, made young Techner the more cautious.

The *LL-X* went lost for a long period after midnight. Her motors were heard over parts of England where Zeppelin engines had never before sent down their awing drum and purr. The craft's cruising radius was great; and two or three days of flight were easily within reach of her fuel supply. For that matter, it wasn't at all unusual for a raiding Zep to spend six, eight or even ten hours over hostile soil. The length of the night had often been the length of the raid—before English planes and guns had come into their own.

Liverpool, one hundred and thirty-five miles from The Wash, heard the *LL-X* pass at 1:00 A.M. Points down in Wales reported it between that hour and 2:00. Then it staggered a course south and east till it was over Bristol Channel at 3:15. Here an electric storm was filling the night. And on through the worst of that storm the *LL-X* rode. The *LZ*, that Zeppelin which had started for home with two dead motors, picked up a wireless from Techner during the worst of that storm, at 3:40. The *LL-X* was making a tough passage, reported Captain Techner. He had jettisoned gasoline, water ballast and all other things that could be spared in his effort to send the super craft above the storm.

Techner reported that every metal part of the craft was alive with electricity; and that the topside gunners, and their guns, were still at their exposed posts, haloed in St. Elmo's fire. Those topside gunners had reported the ship hit by lightning time and time again. Techner felt sure that she was losing gas, for his 22,000 feet wasn't being maintained. He didn't know how much more the giant could stand. His bombs had not been dropped.

Bath heard the motors at 4:05. Then the staggering craft took another tack and was next reported far to the southwest, near Exeter. All over the south the storm was general. A searchlight couldn't cut the clouds for a hundred feet; so the danger of attack from airplanes was entirely removed. Not that this was bothering the *LL-X* in the least. Chances were, Captain Techner and crew were too closely centered with their own troubles, and the storm, to give the enemy guns, lights and machines a single stray thought. Fact is, their cargo of inflammable hydrogen was enough to fill their every thought.

Never, during the hours of that storm, was the *LL-X* on an even keel. She took abuse beyond the plans and expectations of her builders. The men in the control car were tossed away from the stanchions to which they held. The wheelman and elevator man time and again, were swung from their controls. Engine men, in the power gondolas, were thrown across hot motors; and the great wonder is that the *LL-X* remained in one piece.

Rain, sleet and even snow—at that great altitude—began to weigh the mighty craft down; and at 4:30, when Devonport heard the drum of motors through the storm, the *LL-X* had fallen below 19,000. The lightning had put her radio out of commission early in the game; and the compass was a crazy thing. Techner and crew were very much alone in that terrible black sky.

Dawn was close at hand when the elements decided to take the whip off that aerial victim. The short summer night had passed too soon, furnished too many thrills, and threatened to bring too many dangers with daylight. Being caught over England, with a wet and heavy ship, was one thing that was just a bit worse than all the other things that had passed. With any sort of light, and hearing Zeppelin motors, airplanes would be sure to come up and at 'em. And they could reach the *LL-X* in her present condition.

Techner knew that the time for his eastward push was long overdue. Some four hundred and fifty miles of travel stood between him and safety, by the shortest possible route, chancing a direct flight via Ostend. The quiet of morn-

ing was in the air. The clouds were breaking here and there; and now and then the observing eyes of the *LL-X* caught shrouded views of the land and water below. It was just after 5:00 A.M. when Techner finally determined the position of his ship. She was off Start Point, with Salcombe to port, and headed eastward over the Channel. Techner held to that chance course, with the super craft now at 18,000 feet. Full power, and on her way.

The *LL-X* had been fifteen hours in flight by then; and her crew were fine-drawn, worn out. Ahead of them, with the best of luck and if the *LL-X* could make her eighty miles per hour, was a homeward stretch of five additional hours. Five hours during which they must run the gantlet every mile of the way. Four hundred and fifty miles, and every mile of it over hostile water and land. It would be five hours during which Death rode the *LL-X*'s back.

Now, standing out across the Channel, Captain Techner and company hoped that the remaining clouds would stick with them. Just give them an overcast sky and they'd do fine hopping from cloud to cloud. More than that they would not ask.

But the new day was warm in the east long before six o'clock. And lazy clouds were drifting away, dispersing themselves in short order. Soon, too soon, the *LL-X* would have to face the world, slapped high against a bright, clear sky. Then what?

The new sun was beginning to dry the great length of silver envelop. Already the craft was lightening, and winning altitude. That was good, but Techner must make the condition better. As before said, the *LL-X* had retained her bomb load even when all other movable things were dropped. Techner now decided to drop a few tons of that weight, retaining only a few of the larger bombs. The noses were unscrewed from the bombs, and they were dropped into the Channel as duds to avoid attracting any attention from observers on land or water. The *LL-X* immediately took on more altitude and passed above the 20,000 level. Her air speed reading was eighty-two; and all motors were O.K.

At six o'clock the Isle of Wight was to port, and the *LL-X* was high above mid-Channel. Through the few remaining clouds, far to starboard, they could see Cherbourg and the traffic filled harbor—a spot where Captain Techner's bomb load could do much for the cause, had Captain Techner the time and desire to detour. Well, he had the desire. And, no doubt, the wild one longed to detour, but the *LL-X* must be brought home. Captain Strasser would be waiting. Waiting? Had Techner known where Strasser was waiting, chances are the wild one would have gone down over Cherbourg. But Cherbourg was aft now, at 6:15, and the great danger that was Dieppe must be passed.

Techner gave way to port and missed Dieppe by as wide a margin as possible, even taking a chance on nearing Portsmouth and the dangers that were there. But no gun had fired on the *LL-X*. No airplane—seaplane or land plane—had been sighted, and the altitude was now 21,000 feet, with the craft's outer skin perfectly dry.

Seven o'clock found them working high across the Strait of Dover where the Channel narrows to a neck. On the right, Etaples and Boulogne were formidable. On the left, Hastings, Dungeness, Dover and all they held and housed must be considered. Worst of all, the whole sky was clear, outrageously clear, and still no danger came up to challenge the passing of the homebound racer.

Calais was ahead and in view when eight o'clock went into the past. Again, to avoid that hot spot, Techner wore off to port. But he had so little to fear now, that it was a wonder the Captain took that precaution. Surely this wasn't the Techner of old. It wasn't the kid who, as crewman and, later, second and first officer of former Zeps, had begged for trouble. The spirit of Strasser was still mighty in the naval air service.

IT WAS well that the *LL-X* had turned to skirt Calais. The presence of the passing ship, in spite of the seeming inactivity, had been noted at a score of Channel points. The Admiralty had sent out the warning, via wireless; and Calais had pursuit ships ready to rise and fly when the moment should arrive. Those pursuit planes, however, all had short time tanks. Two hours and a half was about their limit a-wing. Techner's altitude and northern course put the Calais men out of the running. But the Calais attack did one thing: it induced the commander of the *LL-X* to abandon his via-Ostend entry to Germany. And when three of the pursuing Sopwith Camels gave up the chase, the *LL-X*, still a few thousand feet higher than the ceiling of the Camels, was off the Netherlands, over the North Sea.

9:30 again found the *LL-X* in the clear, with all pursuit shaken off, thanks to the great altitude of the super ship. Techner had cause to cheer and gloat. This passage was glorious! It was just a matter of rounding the neutral Netherlands now, then the rest of the homeward journey would be fair sailing.

That's the way things looked. But the Admiralty wireless had also reached his Majesty's Harwich force which, at the time, was busily sailing an assortment of English battle wagons in a section of the North Sea that happened to be between the bow of the *LL-X* and Helgoland. The fact was, that Harwich force was just north of Borkum, a dot on the Frisian coast over which Captain Techner was very likely to pass.

The strangest thing to be found among the assortment of warned and waiting surface craft was an ordinary naval lighter which followed along aft of an ordinary destroyer. On the lighter's top side was a flat plank platform, some thirty feet wide by fifty in length. On that platform, sprawled and chatting, were eight or ten men. Also on that platform was a Sopwith Camel. This small and fast pursuit job was fully assembled, tarp over prop and motor, and lashed down, wingtips and tail. Its pilot, Naval Lieutenant Bankhead, leaned against the blunt, humped fuselage and talked with the petty officer in charge of crew. Generally speaking, the eyes of all those loafing, gabbing men were on or in the western sky. Captain Techner might well have been surprised had he known how many were interested in his North Sea passage. Being by instinct more or less grandstand, the wild and rash young German might even have been slightly flattered.

Standing out to sea well north of the West Frisian Islands, the *LL-X* was still in very quiet air. But lower, and with the Harwich force on the surface, a brisk north wind prevailed. It was brisk to the extent of a thirty-six mile per hour velocity. For such an occasion they couldn't have ordered a finer wind.

Calais, when its pursuit men had returned, reported by wireless to the Harwich force's flagship. At the time of that wireless, the position of the *LL-X* was estimated as some twenty-five miles northwest of The Hague, Holland. Having received that accurate report, the men on the lighter settled down for another full hour of good old sailorly idleness. There was no cause for hurry. But at the end of that hour a few of the crewmen got off their hams and hocks to pull tarps from the Camel's rotary motor and propeller. A brace of engine men began to inspect the many tricky features of that rotary; for a rotary motor was one wartime device that never quit kidding. A man never could gamble upon that type of engine's probable starting performance. This one had to be right.

Noon had arrived, and the *LL-X* was nearing the home stretch when a British mine-layer, working some forty miles west of the Harwich force, rapped out a wireless communication saying that the enemy was overhead, devilishly high off the north tip of Vlieland. That bit of good news was relayed to the men on the take-off platform aboard the very

ordinary lighter. Forthwith the Camel's crew of one, Lieutenant Bankhead, stepped up, swung a long leg over the small cockpit's gunwale, and was ready for the next move.

The men of the Harwich force could not hope to detect the *LL-X* at a distance of forty miles. But they knew that they could make their squadron seen from the Zeppelin, at that distance. So the squadron, which had been cruising slowly westward on patrol, swung full into the north wind. With the turn made, and all ships in formation, the squadron nosed into the brisk wind, full steam ahead. Back on the take-off platform of the lighter, all men were at their posts. The wingtip and tail lashings had been cast off; and crewmen steadied the light Camel by holding to wings and tail. The petty officer had stepped out front to man the throwing of the rotary's propeller; and Lieutenant Bankhead yelled—

"Ready!"

"Switch off! Petrol on!" called the P.O.

The pilot took care of those instrument adjustments; and the powerful P.O. wound the rotary up like a clock, sucking in a life giving mixture of gas and air. Then he stood back and spit on his mitts.

"Petrol off—switch on!" he barked.

"Off—and on!" came the O.K. from the pit.

Wham! And the rotary was hitting on all nine, rattling out its willing and wild horsepower to the king's taste.

The squadron, piling ahead under forced draught, was pouring an intentional smoke screen from every funnel. A smoke screen that would cause the lookouts aboard a Zeppelin forty miles away to wonder what the devil that mess of ships was running from! Those lookouts did see, and wonder. All eyes of the high flying Zep caught the new sight ahead in jig time. The smoke screen, like a small black plume on a mighty sheet of blue-green sand blasted glass, waved to them; and they knew that this was the enemy flotilla, for their own High Seas fleet wasn't in the habit of going places so late in '18.

The old cocksure, hell-for-leather spirit returned to young and very rash Captain Techner. He could see his own Germany to the south and beyond the smoke screen; and that meant safety. He could see a fine place to dump the few heavy bombs that remained in the *LL-X*'s racks. He could see a whole lot of fun, and maybe more than a bit of glory for self and crew. He could see a chance here to redeem the misfortunes of a raid that had failed, a raid during which he had not dropped a single bomb on a single enemy objective. And above all, a youth of Captain Techner's fine sight could see how easily this bit of business could be handled, and quickly, just in passing.

But there was one thing that neither Techner, nor the eyes of his lookouts, could see. They could not see that twenty-seven feet of wingspread when the Sopwith Camel took full gun, poked its snapping nose into the north wind, and quit the short platform of the very ordinary lighter that was being towed full speed behind a very ordinary, but fast, destroyer. It was 12:17 when Lieutenant Bankhead got under way. Keeping always in the bright sun, he climbed and climbed.

The *LL-X*'s bombing officer and Captain Techner talked the thing over. The drift of the smoke screen, and the sand-blast surface of the sea told them that there was wind down there. A shot from their own Very pistol told them that the wind at their altitude was not the same wind as that surface gale. So dropping bombs with no way of determining the windage was just a matter of throwing bombs away. There'd be no percentage in the action from such an altitude. So, drop the altitude and bring the *LL-X* within efficient striking distance. It was the only logical thing to do; and it was so safe too. An airship against surface craft! Why it was duck soup. Here was the thing about which

Captain Peter Strasser had been rapping official desk tops all during the years of the war—rapping official desk tops in loud argument. Surface craft against Zeppelins—bah!

Captain Techner, warming to the thrill ahead, ordered the elevator man to pull the bottom from under the *LL-X*. Engineers and gunners were ordered to be on the alert. Bombers screwed fuses back into place; and the officer in charge of tripping the drops was at his post. The eight Maybach motors were purring at reduced throttle, and the bow of the *LL-X* was pointing down and ahead. Captain Techner, forgetting the long travail of the hours that had gone, stood behind the helmsman and sang snappy snatches of a certain ribald ditty that had to do with the British and their far famed mastery of the sea. Meanwhile —but never cutting in on Captain Techner's measure of joy—a small Camel was climbing high into the noonday sun. And still under its screen of identifying smoke, the Harwich squadron plied its northward course.

At half past twelve the *LL-X* was within view of the eyes on the surface. Observers of that fleet placed the long cigar's altitude as being about ten thousand feet; and she was within fifteen miles of the things upon which her few heavy bombs were to be laid. During the next few minutes, however, the Germans were to lose more of that altitude; for this must be a sure job, and pulled at a very spectacular range. The Englishmen, flaunting that dense smoke screen in such a bold manner, were just asking for it; and they were going to get just exactly what they asked for. So 'elp 'em!

Quickly, but flying far and safe, Lieutenant Bankhead had sent his climbing Sop-Camel to 15,000 feet. Like Captain Techner and colleagues, Lieutenant Bankhead was playing this hand close to the vest. The thing must be timed to the minute; and never for a second did the Camel quit its sun ambush.

The minute of action was very close. To help the cause and make sure that the Germans would keep their whole attention on the surface squadron, the Harwich force began to toss a small piece barrage in the general direction of the oncoming *LL-X*.

Battle! Navy versus air! Captain Techner and company, eyes glued to the fleet, thrilled to their very hearts and anxiously awaited the moment that would find their mighty super Zep over the flagship. The *LL-X* was now at 6,000 feet, and only a few miles astern.

At 12:40 the pride of German air had reached the low level chosen for that job of work. It turned its bow into the north wind. Engineers received the full speed ahead signal; and the eight motors roared into new life. Techner, still singing and jigging behind his helmsman, could now count the ships of the squadron through the wind tossed smoke of the screen. Now and then a passing cloud of that Newcastle perfume drifted up to the *LL-X*, and whirled blackly in the spinning propeller disks. It smelled good to the Captain. There was, now and again, a whiff of English powder. That too was a thrill for the young and rash commander.

It was more than just a thrill, however, for the small piece barrage was no little menace. The fleet was tossing the flaming stuff, those hellish, airship-burning shells of which Captain Techner had heard so much, but seen so little. He knew that those same shells had already taken toll where Zeppelins fought and fell. Yet, gunners of a fleet that is running at full speed, and tossing, are gunners who can hope for nothing that approaches accurate fire control. Only a chance shot could do any damage; and the chance was very remote. But again, if enough guns toss enough stuff aloft, they're bound to fill every foot of a given radius, in time. But the Germans were just about set to foreclose the time—the borrowed time perhaps—under which the Harwich force was then operating.

Men of the fleet might tell you that

Lieutenant Bankhead was scandalously reckless with the lives of his on-the-surface compatriots, so close did that Camel-mounted wingmaster allow the *LL-X* to approach. Less than half a mile remained for the German ship to travel, till it would come directly above —or slightly windward—the squadron. But Lieutenant Bankhead was on his way out of the sun, standing on his rudder-bar, and letting that Camel dive.

Captain Techner had quit his clowning, stopped that gay and ribald singing, and stood ready to signal his bombing officer to do his stuff. Foot by foot, steadily, the *LL-X* nosed that stiff north wind aside and crawled closer to its prey.

Then, queering the show at the very last second, the lookout phoned down from the machine gun platform atop the ship.

"Airplane on port bow, diving!" was all the lookout yelled.

The next second was filled to the brim with machine gun fire. There was the drumming rattle of the *LL-X*'s own topside guns. But worse than that, there was the clear snap of machine guns beyond the limits of the ship.

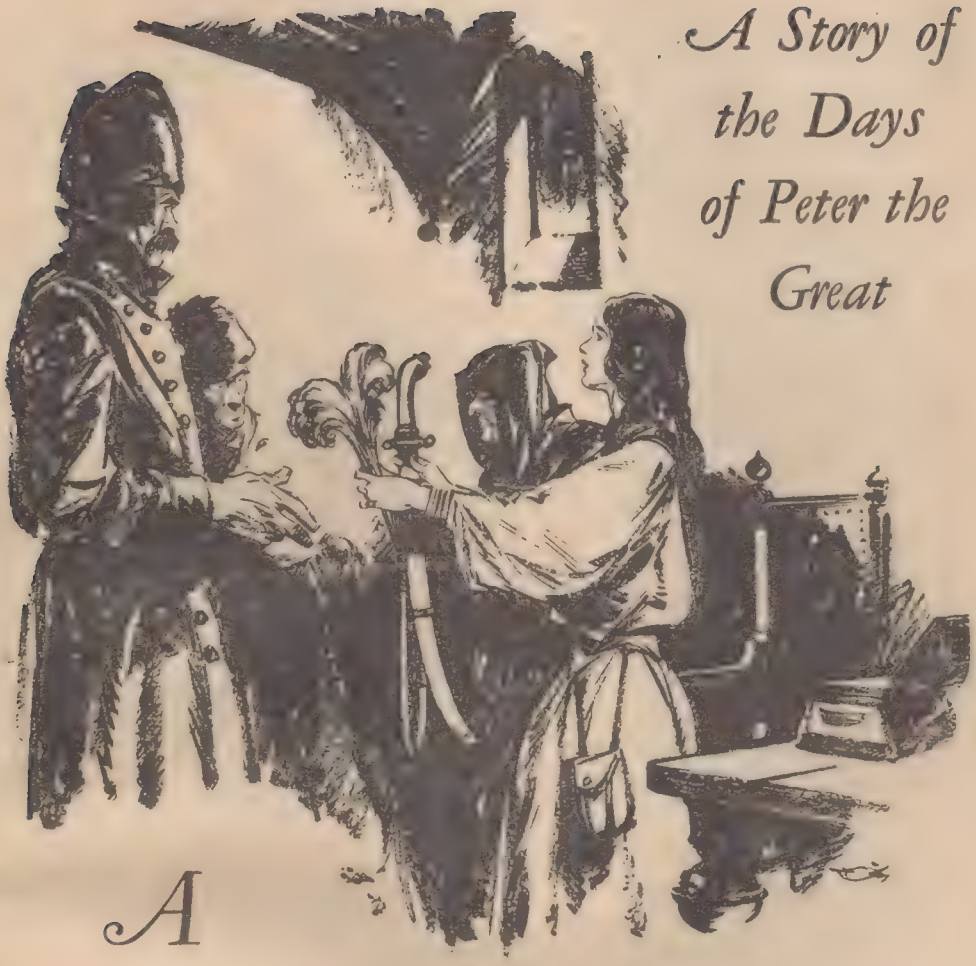
Captain Techner, turning to order his watch officer topside, saw the Camel flash past the control car's windows, to starboard. The watch officer was halfway up the ladder. A man coming down the ladder, from within the ship, kicked the watch officer aside, and yelled:

"Fire! We're on fire! Can't you see we're on fire?"

Through a mile of fall the *LL-X* burned yellow-red in the noonday sun. All the way, falling, tumbling, plunging, her crewmen went ahead of her to the sea. Into the foaming wake of the Harwich force the tangled, charred mess plunged; and another Visit in Red had been made.

If Captain Strasser hadn't died with the *L-70,* chances are he would have passed out with a broken heart—the *L-70* and *LL-X* sent down in flames, the *L-65* turned back with fire in a midship gondola, and other injuries, and the *LZ* limping home with dead motors. Of all five ships only the *L-53* returned to Germany untouched. But she had done no bombing. Of her commander it was said that he was a far better navigator than raider.

Thus ended the day's work and the last Zeppelin raid on Britain.



A Story of the Days of Peter the Great

A SPRAY *of* BLUE FEATHERS

By NATALIE B. SOKOLOFF

TWO horsemen, riding briskly along the dusty country road, neared the town gate just as the sun sank into the horizon far behind them, beyond the endless green steppe which it had taken them the whole day to traverse, now at a mad gallop, now at a persistent, monotonous trot.

The gray stones of the high gates some fifty feet straight ahead of them flashed orange for a second, then purple, then slowly a dull greenish blue; while the vast sweeping stretch of the green grass behind them, gay with sunset for a moment, instantly turned the same dull greenish blue, that peculiar tint the Ukrainian steppes assume at dusk after a glaring Summer day.

In the high vast skies deep and blue overhead, with but a few streaks of

green-yellow and black along the distant horizon, two or three early stars appeared, as if blinking down at the two solitary riders who, bringing their steeds to a sharp halt, pulled out their kerchiefs and proceeded to wipe their heads and necks, which were covered with dust and drenched with sweat.

A cool breeze rising in the steppe drifted toward them and toward the low, village-like town farther on, and the riders breathed in hungrily this fresh air reminiscent of wet earth and green grass.

One of the riders was a colossal, heavy-set man, in age about forty, and clothed in the rich dress of a Polish nobleman. He had a large head covered with a mass of black short hair; a large stony face, red-brown in hue, and wore a long coarse black mustache. Contemptuous indifference characterized this giant's general appearance and demeanor.

He was the kind of man who would have looked imposing in the lowest environment, dressed anyhow, even in rags; but as he was, sitting motionless astride his heavy white steed, dressed in the velvet, silks and gold braid of a Polish gentleman's 18th Century costume, with the tall fur hat adorned with a long gold tassel in front, he looked a veritable monument to something magnificent, great and famous.

The other rider presented a comical contrast by the side of this colossal Pole. Judging by his apparel, a short black coat, blue breeches and a humble cap, he was evidently the giant's servant. He had a tiny sad face, small pale eyes and a thin little figure like a jockey. His manner toward his master was that of a menial of the times, all obeisance, yet smacking of familiarity and easeful comradeship. Apparently the colossal Pole in his eyes was something of a god, an idol to be worshiped, admired and treated with reverence. Yet he watched him uneasily all the time.

The little servant's name was Kazy, and at the moment he seemed annoyed and angry. Perhaps because riding was not at all in his line, for despite his jockey's figure he sat astride his low, dingy looking horse in the melancholy pose of one who dislikes the pastime.

Wiping his tiny face carefully, Kazy regarded his master askance; sighed, coughed, and at last said hesitantly:

"I would advise your Honor," he stammered, "that is—hm—if your Honor will permit me to advise you, I would advise your Honor—hm—to somewhat conceal your Honor's features—hm! Pull the hat down over your Honor's eyes—hm!"

The monument-like gentleman turned his great head and the black, fierce eyes looked at the speaker for a moment thoughtfully. Then without a word and preserving the while that grave and dignified immobility which made him look so much like a statue, the giant Pole touched his heavy white mount lightly with his silver spurs; the horse's forelegs rose into midair, its wide nostrils dilated furiously, the hoofs plunged into the dust again and the steed reared and jumped into a gallop.

"Hm!" said Kazy aloud to the world at large, but quickly spurred his sorry looking horse and followed his master toward the town gates.

Once through them, the riders found themselves in the market square full of carts, wagons, merchants' stalls, and crowded with townspeople and Cossacks who pushed and jostled against one another, shouting, arguing, gathering in groups about the dealers in arms, around the venders of hot meat pies, taking no notice whatever of the two riders who, their progress blocked by the crowd, now stood stockstill; the colossal figure of the Pole rising majestically above the sea of swaying, noisy humanity, while little Kazy swore, cursed, called to the saints and, flourishing his *nagaika*, the short Cossack whip, now demanded, now emplored:

"Give way! Give way your Worships! Give way, you dirty dogs—you swine!"

His master only looked down at the crowd which pressed on all sides of him,

silent and indifferent, never more like a monument than at this moment.

Kazy was already hoarse with shouting and red with fury, when suddenly, as one, two, then more and more heads were turned toward the giant Pole, a whisper ran through the crowd, like a breeze passing over the grass of the steppe, and there fell a strange hush over all. Every one stood silent, gaping, nudging one another. Again a whisper. Then silence once more.

"What did I tell you?" whispered a tall young Cossack to his neighbor, as the neighbor nudged him meaningly.

They exchanged significant glances.

"Here—move a bit!" the tall Cossack suddenly shouted. He waved his arms and pushed the men nearest to him back furiously.

"His Honor wishes to proceed. Give way, there!"

"Good evening to you, most noble sir," the tall Cossack said respectfully to the Pole, who, the crowd now giving way hurriedly, rode past.

The giant inclined his head negligently.

The black eyes, brilliant in the bluish dusk, swept over the young Cossack's reverently bowed head, then turned away hastily as the man, raising his head quickly, stared into his face intently.

"Did you see the way he looked at me?" whispered the tall Cossack to his neighbor excitedly.

"Seems to me the gentleman looks that way at every one and everything," returned the other blandly. "Still—what do you think?"

"I'm certain it's he," said the other, with glowing eyes.

"Seems to me it's too dark to be sure—" began the bland one.

"Too dark? Fool!" exclaimed the tall Cossack angrily. "As if one needs light to know him."

"And what about the feathers? The spray of blue feathers he never goes about without?" pursued the neighbor.

"Feathers! Is it time to think of feathers, you think?"

"All right, all right. Shall we follow him?"

"No," returned the tall Cossack. "That would look suspicious. He can take care of himself. Don't you worry," he added with a laugh.

"Take care of himself—his face open for all to see and recognize! Just like him! What if Mazeppa learns that he is alive, and here in Poltava?"

"Mazeppa is busy with Swedish ambassadors," said the tall Cossack with a bitter smirk. "Moreover, he thinks Kotchubey dead. If he hears rumors to it being otherwise, he'll think them just rumors . . . Come on. We must go and spread—the rumors," he added with a significant wink.

THEY began to make their way through the crowd toward the broad, village-like streets and low whitewashed dwellings beyond the market square.

"Hey, you! You spoke to him—" A low whisper and a pull at the wide sleeve of his long black coat made the tall Cossack stop and turn his head.

A short, plump Cossack, wearing a large *papaha*, the Cossack's hat of sheepskin, was at his side. He whispered quickly—

"Is it really Kotchubey?"

"Kotchubey had his head cut off yesterday, in this very square. That's fact. Understand?" replied the tall Cossack very loudly as if he wished every one to hear and remember what he said. "Mazeppa knows it was Kotchubey, and no other. So Kotchubey is no more. Understand?"

"I understand. I understand, yes," cried the plump Cossack joyfully. "Yes, we all understand," he went on, exchanging significant glances with other Cossacks who were crowding about him. "Yes. But where are you going? When will you return; tell us—I mean—"

"I know what you mean," the tall Cossack cut him short. "I'll be busy for the next few hours. Then I'll see you, as usual, at the South Gates.

Goodby." He walked away quickly through the noisy crowd, followed by his bland friend.

The colossal Pole, meanwhile, and his sad faced servant, after inquiring the whereabouts of an inn, turned off the market square into the streets bordered with old poplars, black in the blue dusk, and pulled up before a low, whitewashed building. The Pole dismounted, threw the bridle into the eager hands of a menial who had rushed out of the door at the guests' approach, and strode unhurriedly to the door.

The spacious front room was illuminated brilliantly by numerous candles set on small tables scattered about the apartment and on the sideboard covered with meats, game, pies and small kegs of cider and beer. Like the market square, the room was crowded with men, most of them Cossacks, in their enormous black, gray or white sheepskin hats; long, black and voluminous coats; and high boots with spurs.

All were armed to the teeth, and to any one who could have seen them now, as the Pole did through the dark doorway, this assemblage of animated faces, with short mustaches, all sunburned to a copper hue and glistening in the bright candlelight—to any one it would have been perfectly clear that this was not a chance gathering, no plain killing of tedious time over a jug of beer.

There were the excitedly glowing eyes, the quick gestures, the splendid white teeth exposed in perpetual smiles, shrieks of loud laughter, the grave monotone of argument. Every one was gay, happy, reckless with the nearness of approaching battle. And here they were, come to talk the matter over at their favorite hostelry.

There were several groups, however, whispering cautiously among themselves. And now and then a Cossack, on entering the room, would make a sign to one or two of his comrades seated at the tables and they would rise and hurry toward him and begin to whisper excitedly.

It was the sight of these mysteriously quiet figures which apparently caused the Pole to hesitate on the threshold. At first he had made as if to stride into the crowd with his customary indifference, but now he only stood there unseen in the darkness of the doorway, frowning and pulling at his long black mustache.

But the host, perfectly bald, evidently an old, retired Cossack, had already seen him. He ran up to him, bowed and, raising his head with the respectful, "And will your worshipful Honor desire—?" gasped suddenly.

"You here! You here—alive!" he stammered, pale, then red; he was a host no more; just a man, agitated, joyous, incredulous.

"Do you think I walk about dead?" the Pole grumbled, contemptuously ironic.

"Oh, your Honor!" whispered the man hurriedly. "To think of it! They are all talking about it—" he motioned toward the crowded tables. "Oh, they are very cautious. Very cautious. And I, the old fool that I am, wouldn't believe them. But could it be otherwise? As if any one would dare to cut your head off! Yes, yes, I won't say another word. A room—a room where no one will see you. I understand perfectly!" He laughed and shook his bald head as if rebuking himself. "To think of it! Come—if your Honor will deign to follow me."

And with a furtive glance about the noisy room he walked, or rather crept, toward a small door, pushed it open and, motioning to the Pole to follow, disappeared. The Pole shrugged his shoulders, hesitated, then stooping heavily to avoid collision with the door beam, followed.

"No one uses these stairs," the host assured him in a whisper.

In complete darkness they mounted the creaking stairs. The host stopped, produced a bunch of keys. He opened a door and, his guest striding in, entered after him. The two windows gave just

enough light for them to see each other's face.

"Bed, table, chairs," whispered the host. "And if your Honor wishes, I will bring supper."

The Pole took off his fur hat with its long gold tassel, flung it on the bed, and sat down by the table. For a long while he remained silent, looking straight before him into the windows blue with the dusk beyond, as if thinking something over. Then very quietly, and without turning his head, he spoke to the innkeeper.

"I am a Polish gentleman come here on business. I have never been in Poltava before. I have a servant with me, and our mounts. Take care of the mounts and send my servant to me. Understand?"

"Your Honor—" the host smiled broadly—"I understand perfectly."

"Go then. And bring me candles."

"Candles," whispered the host, horrified. "Most worshipful Honor, you must not have candles. Oh, pray don't be angry," he went on quickly. "I know you are brave. Yes—of course. But think of me. What will they do to me, should they find you here? After all, and begging your Honor's pardon, Mazeppa is the master here."

"Mazeppa?" repeated the Pole ruminatingly. "He is your *getman?*"

"Ha! Your must have your little joke!" the host laughed, regarding the Pole with worshipful admiration. "You, asking who Mazeppa is? That is good!"

The Pole turned his head to study the speaker silently and for some while. Then he half opened his mouth as if to speak, and to speak freely; but, evidently changing his mind, he only shrugged his shoulders and said calmly—

"Go."

Bowing profoundly, the host hurried out, closing the door behind him. Almost at once, however, he opened it, thrust in his bald head and inquired in a respectful whisper—

"Please, your Honor, shall I lock your Honor up?"

The Pole sprung to his feet, filling the whole room suddenly with his largeness and his fury.

"Don't you dare do anything of the kind, you fool! You—you—" He trembled with rage and some other emotion which strongly resembled fear and sudden suspicion.

"Yes, your Honor," agreed the host humbly, neither surprised nor offended by the guest's anger. He only bowed once more reverently and disappeared.

THE Pole was at the door in a single stride and with all his strength pulled at the handle as if he expected to find it locked and bolted. But the door flung open, and the Pole heard the sound of the host's steps receding down the stairs. He pushed the door shut, strode back to the table, sat down in a chair and, crossing his huge arms across his enormous chest, suddenly let his great head droop as if with fatigue, or sorrow, and remained thus, a black, heavy figure, ruminative and solitary, until the simultaneous entrance of his servant Kazy and the innkeeper, bringing in his supper.

"Bring a light," ordered Kazy bruskly in his broken Russian.

He thought it a great privilege to serve a man like his master, was jealous of any one who chanced, even for a moment, to step into his shoes, and at once assumed toward the offender a manner full of disdain and hatred.

"No lights," said the Pole shortly, and began to eat.

"Any orders? Any messages, your Honor?" whispered the host.

The Pole shook his head vigorously.

"I understand," the host agreed with his worshipful smile, while Kazy looked from one to the other quickly.

As soon as the door closed on the bowing innkeeper, the Pole said to Kazy in Polish—

"Eat."

Kazy obeyed. But he ate slowly, sulked, fidgeted on his chair, was sud-

denly seized with a fit of violent coughing, and continued to cough, watching his master askance the while, until the Pole inquired frigidly whether he had caught a cold.

"No," said Kazy haughtily.

"Then why cough? You know I dislike the noise," remarked his master gravely. "Now, listen: You will go to the market square. Jostle about. Talk with one, many. Make acquaintances. Find out—you know what, and come back in half an hour. Understand? Talk, but keep your mouth shut. See?"

Kazy sighed, nodded, put on his cap and, with sudden desperation, angrily demanded to know what that idiot the innkeeper meant by his "I understand; I understand," and his stupid smiles.

"Don't know," said the Pole.

"Well, you better find out," advised Kazy rudely. "Though I am almost certain that you do know and just won't tell. I know you—you might do anything!"

It was getting on toward nightfall. Lights sprang up here and there in the small dark windows of the white huts, as Kazy hurried along the broad streets bordered with tall poplars, toward the market square. There he moved about, making friends, treating them to beer, listening, asking questions. But, in the expression of the Pole, he contrived at the same time to "keep his mouth shut", and in half an hour was back at the inn.

"Well?" said his master, as he entered.

The Pole in his velvet, silk and gold braid loomed dark in the moonlit room, his great head bowed low, his huge arms crossed on his chest as he sat by the table.

Kazy coughed hesitantly.

"Well?" repeated the Pole. "Speak out. What have you heard? Is there anything we can do? Come, man, talk."

"Hmm," said Kazy. "If your Honor would listen to my advice, I would advise, to—hmm!" He coughed, gathered courage and added quickly, "Order our horses saddled and make away as swiftly as possible."

"What's the hurry?" asked the Pole blandly. "Well, tell me what you heard. And stop coughing!"

"I've heard an earful, your Honor. And little to give you pleasure," began Kazy. "The execution was yesterday. I mean, Kotchubey was beheaded—yes, publicly. Hmm—"

He threw a furtive glance at his master. Evidently it had cost the sad faced little man a great deal of courage to impart this particular piece of news. But the Pole did not even move a muscle. Only his head seemed to bow still lower over his crossed arms.

"Go on," he said at last and his voice was unchanged.

"Well," obeyed Kazy, "Kotchubey was convicted of some crime or other. Wanted to make himself king or something. But now it seems the Cossacks are beginning to suspect Mazeppa of harboring that very plan himself. In short, the Cossacks are divided in Poltava, which means in Ukrainia. Some are for Mazeppa and the Swedes. If the Swedes win, there is a chance for Mazeppa to become king. For the Swedes have made a bargain with him. The others are for going with the Russians. If the Russians win, Ukrainia will remain an independent state. And that's what Kotchubey always wished. Now, Czar Peter is approaching Poltava. Some say he has passed through Loobny. That's about thirty miles from here."

"How will they get to the Russians, these Cossacks?" put in the Pole. "What about Mazeppa?"

"Oh Mazeppa! He thinks, now that Kotchubey is—eh—no more, he need have no fear of the Cossacks. Without a leader, Cossacks are just—well, nothing. As to using force on them, why, they would just murder every one in Poltava, if one thought of doing anything of the sort. And so they are setting out, those who had always been of Kotchubey's party, to join the Russians. They'll go about midnight."

Having finished his report, Kazy looked at his master expectantly; but

the Pole was silent.

"Well, if your Honor will allow me to advise you—" Kazy began his customary phrase feebly.

"We will stay here and await developments," the Pole cut him short.

"Ho, developments!" cried Kazy angrily. "Unless you mean a noose for your Honor and me, your servant. Eh?"

"Who would take so much trouble with us? We are but small fry," remarked his master blandly, but with a sudden gay twinkle in his stony eye.

"Who? Who? If you but heard them talking—these Cossacks. They say that Kotchubey has never been executed at all. That Kotchubey is alive. Is here, in Poltava. That he came dressed as a Polish gentleman. And when some one says that he saw with his own eyes Kotchubey beheaded, ten answer that no one saw it done with his own eyes because of the five rows of guards and Mazeppa's men standing about the scaffold and blocking the view. That's what they say! And they keep asking each other that if it is Kotchubey—this one who is in Poltava—then where are his blue feathers?"

"Blue feathers?" repeated the Pole.

"Yes, blue feathers. A spray of blue feathers Kotchubey wears in his hat. They seem to attach great importance to these feathers, the barbarians . . . That's what you've done!" Kazy shook his head angrily. "And now Mazeppa will learn of this and will be after us. And he'll kill us—both of us."

"Well," remarked the Pole lazily, "we die but once."

The other made a gesture of despair as if to say, "What's the use of talking with such a one?"

Suddenly a cautious, shuffling step was heard at the door, and the two men, all at once tense with expectancy, turned their heads and watched the door as it opened slowly and noiselessly. A dim light illuminated the doorway and on the threshold stood the dark, stooping figure of an old woman. She was a regular witch, half a dozen or so shawls thrown over her shoulders, as many long skirts sweeping the floor; her face was long, dark, sharp eyed, her mouth toothless. There was a lighted lantern in her upraised hand.

FOR a moment she stood on the threshold peering into the room. Then she stepped forward, approached the Pole and, holding her light high, scrutinized his features closely. Then, setting the lantern on the table, she suddenly fell on her knees at his feet. She took his hand, kissed it fervently, then rising, panting with emotion, she said quickly:

"The Lord be praised! You are indeed my master, the noble Kotchubey, the father of my darling Maria! The innkeeper did not lie, then. He sent for me. He said—"

"My good woman," the Pole interrupted her with a slight grimace of annoyance. "I am a Polish gentleman. I have come to Poltava on business. Understand?"

"Of course I understand, master," replied the old witch, her wrinkled face distorted horribly with what was supposed to be a smile. "Polish gentleman, indeed. And a Polish hat too." She took the hat from the bed, turned it over in her bony hands, then threw it back. "But where is your spray of blue feathers? You never go without them. I know, I know," she said quickly as the Pole opened his mouth to speak. "I won't say another word about it. But, master, master!" She suddenly began to wring her hands. "What doings there are at home, in our dear Dikanka, since your—I mean, since Kotchubey's execution yesterday. How shall I tell you? How shall I tell you of the great sorrow that has befallen us, master?"

She fell in a heap of her numerous shawls and skirts at the Pole's feet once more, embracing them and sobbing violently.

"My good woman," began the Pole. "I am a Polish gentleman, come to Poltava—"

She rose, wiped her eyes, and again smiled that smile of hers, full of cunning, love, worship and grief.

"You haven't changed a bit!" she cried with admiration. Then sighing, she hurried on. "Maria left her husband, Mazeppa, when she learned of Kotchubey's execution. Raving mad she is. Yes, lost her mind completely. That's why I am here. Her father cursed her when she ran away to marry Mazeppa. But would he have the heart to push her away, now, if he but saw her? There she sits in the turret, poor child, as she used to in the old days when on the lookout for her father's return from the wars. Stark mad, poor Maria, calling for her father, pleading for his forgiveness . . . Come—your horses are saddled. I told the innkeeper."

"Give me my hat," said the Pole.

Kazy began to cough, but his master only looked at him, and the little man handed him his hat.

Then, the old woman leading the way with her lantern, the three descended the stairs; and, through a side door, emerged into the back alley. Here the innkeeper stood holding two mounts. A third was tied to the fence. The Pole and Kazy sprang into saddle. The old woman, extinguishing her lantern, panting and sighing, scrambled into hers. She rode astride, like a man, and there was something comical yet sinister in the picture she presented on horseback; a strange Amazon, bent, gaunt, grotesque with the numerous shawls and skirts which covered her completely and her toothless head that shook perpetually.

However, she proved a first rate rider. To avoid passing through the streets and the market square, she led her companions along back alleys, across fields, gardens, and thus into the road which wound on through the steppe; the road by which the Pole and his servant had entered Poltava earlier in the day. Here, all three riding abreast, they spurred their horses to a brisk trot and rode forth in the direction of Dikanka, the suburban palace of Kotchubey, which stood in the midst of its vast parks, orchards and flower gardens, six miles north of Poltava.

On the way they met no one. There was but the endless steppe flooded with moonlight, and the only sound in the surrounding stillness was the gay beat of the horses' hoofs. But Kazy again and again would throw furtive glances over his shoulder, then bend in his saddle to whisper into the Pole's ear:

"Let's turn back while there's still time, your Honor. Mazeppa might be after us any moment. We shall be beheaded, or worse even. Hanged. I feel it in my bones. We will be hanged."

But the Pole only looked at him, and Kazy sighed and shook his head and said "Eh!" bitterly, under his breath.

And soon there rose before them the dark turrets and bastions of the Kotchubey palace above the sea of treetops silvered by the moon. Here and there lights gleamed through the dense growth in a few of its hundred black windows, while in the uppermost turret something long and white could be discerned moving to and fro in the square dark aperture.

The old woman turned in her saddle and, pointing with a bony finger in the direction of that turret, said—

"That's Maria."

The gates swung open. Some ten Cossacks along the drive bowed low, respectfully silent. The old woman, dismounting, said something to them, and they all stared at the Pole and again bowed low, slowly.

Passing through a dozen luxuriously furnished rooms and traversing several long and gloomy passages, the old woman léd them to a circular stairway and up the stairs, into the turret. It was open on all sides. The wind whistled here freely. The star covered and moonlit skies were its walls. On a couch hung with silks, on eiderdown cushions, lay a young woman dressed in long white robes, her black hair blown all over and about her pale face and falling about her trembling shoulders. She was moaning

feebly, calling, "Father, father! Forgive me!" She took no notice of the newcomers. She was mad.

"Maria, poor Maria," said the Pole.

"Do not be angry with her," pleaded the old woman. "She is suffering with remorse. Forgive her. Remove your curse, Kotchubey."

The Pole strode up to the madwoman and took her hand. She then threw back from her face the black cloud of hair and looked at him.

"Father!" she said. "I knew you would come. They did not dare to kill you. Mazeppa is a coward. He wants to be king. But you—you tricked him. And now you will save Ukrainia . . ." she closed her eyes and was silent.

"Maria," said the Pole gently.

"Do you forgive your child, father?" whispered the madwoman, opening her eyes.

"Your father forgives you everything. Think no more about it," replied the Pole softly. "Get well, now. Your woman will take care of you, and later —well, we shall see. Goodby, Maria."

He bent over her and then, straightening his shoulders, he let go her hand and turned away. There was a new light of determination and purpose in his cold eyes. The granite mouth and jaw were set firmly as if with some new energy.

"Come," he said to Kazy. "We go to Poltava."

But as he strode toward the door, the madwoman sprang to her feet and, calling to him to wait, flung off the silk covers of her couch, stooped quickly, pulled out a drawer built into the couch frame and drew out of it a long spray of blue feathers.

"Your blue feathers, father!" she cried shrilly. "You thought of going among your Cossacks without them! But they think you dead! How would they know you are really the great Kotchubey?"

She bent to rummage in the drawer again, and this time pulled out a heap of clothing and a long sword.

"I stole them from Mazeppa, my husband," she explained, as she stood there, a tall, fierce white figure, the black hair blown about her moonlit face by the wind that whistled through the turret. "Mazeppa! Oh, how could I have been so blind? Why didn't I listen to you, father? But then, was I the only one to think him great—yes, great and good, as good as he was handsome? Half Ukrainia admired him. Full of action, zeal, clever, gay, brilliant; he seemed to me the best of men. And how careful he had been not to show his real self to me until we married. Then little by little, he let himself go. Then I knew why you, father, had hated him so; yes, and despised him. But no one can imagine the baseness that man is capable of! Think of it: it was he himself who told me of your execution. And your clothes which they made you take off in prison, he brought them to me, his wife and your daughter!

"In the closet where he kept his gold and jewels, he locked them. He was going to treasure them, guard them. Yes, this sword, this plain blue coat, this hat and the spray of blue feathers—they represented to him as to every one else, Kotchubey's strength, Kotchubey's greatness . . . This spray of blue feathers! The sight of it alone would spur half Ukrainia to follow the man who carried it no matter to what fate that man led them!" She caressed the long spray in her hand, touching tenderly each blue and glittering feather with a trembling finger. "And here's the hat. I'll fix them on," she added softly.

SHE grew very quiet suddenly, lost in thought. The Pole took Kotchubey's clothes gently out of her hands, handed them to Kazy, and the two of them, followed by the old woman, descended the stairs. In the drive the Pole nodded to the old Cossack who stood holding the white mount by the bridle, and sprang into saddle. He then addressed the Cossack quietly.

"I have heard it said that the noble Kotchubey had a friend, as famous al-

most as himself. Could I see him?"

"I understand most worshipful sir—" and the old Cossack bowed low. "You mean the Spark. He—"

There was a sound of approaching hoofs and a horseman appeared at the end of the drive, riding furiously.

"Here he is—the spark!" cried the old Cossack.

The rider was young, tall, slender, wore the long black Cossack coat, a small hat of white sheepskin; was fully and heavily armed. Both the Pole and Kazy recognized him at once as the tall Cossack who had cleared the way for them in the square that very day.

On coming abreast of the Pole the Spark reined in sharply and, bending in the saddle, he peered into the giant's face.

"Well?" he demanded gaily, flashing his splendid white teeth.

"Well?" returned the Pole lazily after meeting his gaze without flinching. But a quick sigh, like a sigh of relief, escaped his huge chest. "Who told you I'd be here?" he added.

"The innkeeper," said the Spark. "But how did you manage to trick Mazeppa? I knew, we all knew, he would never dare do away with you. It was all sham, of course, that execution. Some thief or other was beheaded probably . . . But never mind that now. You'll tell me later. And now to business!"

He turned his mount right about and alongside the Pole's.

"Yes, to business," agreed the Pole gravely.

Followed by Kazy, they began to ride toward the gates.

"What are your orders?" inquired the Spark respectfully.

"No definite orders as yet," returned the other thoughtfully. "We will just ride on slowly toward Poltava. I want to have a look at the Cossacks. How many of them, approximately, are leaving Poltava to join the Czar?"

"A good ten thousand in all. You know," the Spark went on, "I've been busy the whole evening letting it be known, here and there, that you are alive and here. They don't quite believe it yet, however. And they *must* believe it! Mazeppa is expecting the Swedes in Poltava tomorrow. And the Czar Peter is very near already. It will be a nice little battle, Kotchubey. But unless the Cossacks recognize you, the Swedes will smash the Russians. The Czar's only hope lies in your Cossacks. And what are the Cossacks without a leader?"

They had passed through the gates of Dikanka and were in the open steppe, riding along the winding road in the direction of Poltava. The moon, high up in the clear Ukrainian skies, flooded the vast plain with its brilliant light. Far, far ahead of them gleamed dimly the lights of the simple little capital. But the nearness of the normal, everyday life, which those lights seemed to represent, only intensified the free, poignant aspect and atmosphere of the endless steppe.

The air, the stars, the fragrance of the high grass, the very feeling of loneliness which assails one instantly on entering the steppes, all quickens one's blood with longing for adventure, for the unknown, for that something never reached nor recognized which calls to the man to leave his home and fare boldly.

It was this very call which now knocked at the hearts of the three lonely riders. Even the sad faced little Kazy, for all his contempt of this barbarous land with its countless silly customs, its Cossacks, steppes, and all, felt it so keenly that he began to sing something in a comically thin and trembling little voice. The Spark, on his part, never ceased smiling, threw his handsome head well back and gazed about him proudly, looking as pleased as a king. The colossal Pole preserved his immobility, but there was something in the way his hand grasped the reins which seemed to indicate that he wished for nothing better than to go on riding like this across the steppe, on and on, forevermore.

"They are coming," said the Spark

suddenly. "Let's stand here by the roadside and watch them pass."

"Might as well get a glimpse of me," remarked the Pole.

They guided their horses into the grass, and stood parallel to the road and facing it.

Black in the moonlight, in their long black coats and great sheepskin hats, the mounted Cossacks, singly, in pairs, in groups, an endless caravan along the winding road, appeared in the distance; one after the other silhouetted against the dim lights of Poltava out of which they emerged, then slowly, slowly nearing, they grew in size, came abreast of the motionless horsemen by the roadside and passed on.

"What do you think?" asked the Pole anxiously of the Spark. "Do they take me for Kotchubey? I mean, do they recognize me? Why don't they do something? Say something, if they do?"

"Come, come! This is not at all like you," the Spark spoke in a low voice, regarding his companion with astonishment. "The trial, the prison, and all this business with Mazeppa must have unstrung him a bit," he thought. "What did you expect them to do?" he asked aloud.

"Nothing. Nothing, of course," replied the Pole nervously. "I've been thinking about my dress, that's all. You know Maria brought it home from Mazeppa. And the blue feathers—"

"What more do you want?" said the Spark. "Now don't worry. Everything will be all right. This worrying, it isn't at all like you."

"Isn't it?" The Pole smiled. "Forget it, then."

The first faint light of dawn gilded the eastern skies, the moon paled, the grass grew a brilliant green, the air chilly with the morning mist, when the last group of Cossacks rode past the Pole. The latter, with his companions, then followed them at some distance.

"Look!" said the Spark suddenly, turning to glance back.

Far behind them, distinct in the bright rays of the rising sun, there appeared red coated diminutive figures topped with shining helmets. Out of the town, from behind the white monastery on the left, out of the woods on the right, more and more of them streamed into the open. There seemed no end to them.

"The Swedes!" said the Spark, "And somewhere there among them, old Mazeppa leading his Cossacks. Kotchubey!" He turned to the Pole anxiously. "There's no time to be lost! Your Cossacks will be joining the Russian troops any moment. The battle will be about here somewhere. So much depends—"

"I will join my men immediately," said the Pole quickly. "But I must change." He looked about him anxiously.

"In one of those huts," suggested the Spark.

"The one on that hill there," said the Pole.

On their left, up a slight incline, there gleamed through the trees the white of the hut and outbuildings of a small farmstead. Several estates of that kind were scattered about on the outskirts of the steppe, half hidden in the growth of their gardens. But the hut on the hill was the nearest of them all and toward it the Pole and Kazy galloped off; the Spark hurrying after the Cossacks marching northward.

AS THE Pole and Kazy entered the farmyard they saw on every hand signs of hurried departure. Whoever had lived here had fled at the sight of the approaching armies. From the stables came the sad bleating of some abandoned animal. A large chained dog was barking furiously. They dismounted quickly. The Pole pushed the door of the hut open. Remains of a fire still glowed dimly on the open hearth. That's all he had time to notice; this, and Kazy's step entering behind him, when several large and dark shadows from the doorway suddenly fell on the opposite wall.

The Pole turned quickly. Six rough looking Cossacks had crossed the thresh-

old and threw themselves upon him and little Kazy. The latter, who struggled fiercely and shrieked for help, they handled roughly, dealing him a heavy blow on the head so that Kazy fell and was silent. Two men then set to binding him. Then they kicked him out of their way, and hastened to their comrades busy with the Pole.

Those who held the Pole showed certain respect for their giant captive. Twice the Pole, silent and calm, made to shake them off, but their number and combined strength proved too much for him.

"What do you want?" he cried at last in despair. "I'm a Polish gentleman, come here on business. Let me go! I'll pay you well."

"Begging your Honor's pardon," one of the captors said, "we will have to make your Honor sit on this bench here, like this"—and the six of them at once suited action to the words. "And bind your Honor, like this. And gag you, like this."

All of which was done very neatly.

"We are only obeying Mazeppa's orders," the spokesman of the gang explained. "Whether you are Kotchubey or some one like him, you must be kept out of this battle." He motioned toward the door through which with the sunshine there came the first rare, as if hesitant, sounds of gunfire. "When the Russians are smashed Mazeppa will talk to you. Meanwhile here you must stay, in this hut." And, saluting the Pole, the men went out, pushing the door shut.

They could not lock the door, for the latch was on the inside; as for locks and bolts, there were none. The Pole heard their heavy step receding swiftly. Then all was silent. There was but that sad bleating in the stables and now and then the bark of the dog. Kazy lay very still. His face was deathly pale. Only his breathing, labored and heavy, told the Pole that he was not dead. And the noise of the battle grew in volume. The thunder of cannon never ceased now.

The sun streamed through the small dark window and a large fly buzzed at the pane. The fire on the hearth was slowly turning to embers. Time crept like a snail. The Pole did not know whether minutes or hours had passed since he had entered the hut. The shortening shadows seemed to point to approaching noon. Had he been here then so many hours? Sitting like this, unable to move a limb, a helpless man, and the battle at its peak by now! The heavy guns thundered endlessly.

Suddenly Kazy began to move. He opened his mouth (the men had not thought of gagging him) then his eyes. The Pole watched him anxiously. But again Kazy closed his eyes and lay very still. The Pole's face was turning red with the heat and want of air. The kerchief thrust deep into his mouth was beginning to strangle him. His black eyebrows moved with the pain of it. And again Kazy opened his eyes. Slowly they traveled about the hut, paused on the Pole and the little man made as if to jump to his feet. But only his head jerked violently. The bonds held fast.

"Kazy! Kazy!" the Pole pleaded inwardly, his eyes on the servant's face. "You must do something. Help me. Save me. I must be with the Cossacks. Kazy!"

"That's what you have done!" said Kazy angrily, as if answering his master. "Now what are we to do? Shall I shout for help?"

The Pole shook his head vigorously.

"But we must do something!" cried Kazy.

He looked about the hut. His anxious eyes fell on the hearth. Slowly turning to ashes, the dying fire now and then sent out a tiny flame. Some coals still glowed. Kazy began to crawl toward it on his stomach. His little face was purple with the effort. His arms were tied flat across his back so that he could not use his elbows. Neither could he use his knees, so close together were his feet bound. He had no means by which to make his way to the hearth but on his stomach. And this he used

patiently, persistently; silent and panting with exertion.

The Pole watched him anxiously. Was Kazy really moving? Yes! An inch perhaps; a foot. Now he was moving along quicker. Halfway to the hearth Kazy, exhausted, rested awhile, his head on the earthen floor.

"Don't you worry," he spoke with difficulty. "I'll do it. As long as those coals are red, there's hope for us. Don't you worry now."

He crawled on. At last he reached the hearth. It was wide, open and on the level with the floor. Kazy's task lay in turning himself on his back so that his hands bound tight with the rope could be pressed into the coals. After considerable time, this he accomplished, and his face averted from the Pole, Kazy lay on the hearth, very still. After awhile the smell of burning twine drifted toward the Pole. Then a different smell, like that of burning flesh. But Kazy remained motionless. Now and then he strained his shoulders and arms to see whether the rope were giving way, but felt no difference. The bonds held. Little by little the smell disappeared. Kazy rolled over and off the hearth. The embers were all gray and turning to ashes.

"Damn it!" said Kazy quietly.

He moaned with pain and again laid his head on the floor, too tired even to be concerned by his failure.

There suddenly reached them from outside the sound of heavy feet, nearing slowly. The door of the hut was flung open and on the threshold stood a tall man, bareheaded, his red coat hanging about him in tatters. On his back he carried another man covered with blood.

"Swedes!" thought Kazy. But he did not speak, excited though he was by this sudden appearance of the Swedish soldiers.

The tall Swede seemed oblivious of the two captives. Without even a glance in their direction he crossed the room and laid his wounded comrade on the bench beside the Pole. Then he wandered about the hut, searching until he found a pitcher of water, brought it to his comrade and, supporting the dying man with one arm, made him drink a little of it. The wounded man evidently was past all aid.

"Here," said Kazy in Russian. "Untie us, won't you?"

But the Swede did not understand Russian. He shook his head and barked something in his own tongue.

"What a fool!" cried Kazy. "Can't you see the position we are in? You don't have to understand any language to know what to do! Untie us, I tell you! We are not Russians. We are Poles. Poles! Polish! Poland!"

The Swede again barked something in his own tongue and, having finished bandaging his comrade's wound, now stood up, drew out his sword and approached Kazy.

"What! What are you going to do?" screamed Kazy, convinced that the soldier was going to murder him.

But the Swede was already cutting the ropes about his hands and feet. Then with the help of Kazy he freed the Pole.

"And the Russians? The Cossacks?" cried the Pole. "Who is winning? The Swedes or the Russians?"

At the mention of the Cossacks and Russians, the Swede began to talk quickly. His eyes glowed and he waved his long arms.

"I guess it's the Swedes gaining," said Kazy. "See how happy he looks."

"And the Cossacks?" shouted the Pole. "What do you say?"

"Cossacks? Cossacks!" cried the Swede with a loud laugh, and again waved his arms.

"Retreating, he means," said Kazy.

"We must go at once," cried the Pole. "Where are my clothes?"

"There on the bench," Kazy said. "Careful, your Honor. Don't let him guess on whose side we are. Let's wait till the Swede goes."

But the Swede was already going. His naked sword in his hand, he paused at the door to look back at his wounded

comrade, then opening the door he put out his head cautiously, looked about the yard and at last went out.

"What if he takes my horse?" said the Pole.

"I've put them in the stable," said Kazy. "Now you change. I'll go and bring them out."

In less than five minutes the Pole, dressed in the long blue coat of a Cossack elder and wearing the black sheepskin hat with the spray of blue feathers, was buckling on Kotchubey's long sword. He ran toward the stables as Kazy appeared with the horses. The Pole sprang into saddle. Kazy scrambled into his and, spurring their mounts, the two fled down the hill on to the steppe.

Far away on their right lifted the smoke of the battle. And moving swiftly in their direction a veritable cloud of men . . .

"The Cossacks!" cried Kazy.

But the Pole was already galloping toward them. Kazy followed. And suddenly they were in the midst of that black cloud. The horde of Cossacks was wide eyed with panic and mad with fear. Kazy heard his master's voice shouting:

"Back! Back! Back, you swine!"

And some one cried:

"Blue feathers! See? The blue feathers!" And then the shout, "Kotchubey! Kotchubey!"

And he saw the Pole, naked sword in hand and the blue feathers in his hat waving gaily, suddenly plunge forward at a gallop. The Cossacks followed. Then among the black coats appeared suddenly here and there the red coats of the enemy. Their helmets sparkled in the sun. The Pole waved his sword and one of these red coated horsemen was suddenly headless. The headless body sat in the saddle for a while, then toppled over and out of sight. Kazy galloped on. It seemed to him the Pole was everywhere. Here he was one moment quite near, his eyes flashing fire, brandishing his long sword and shouting orders; then past he flew, the very god of battle, all brilliant color, motion and power; past and into a crowd of red coated Swedes . . .

Bullets whistled past. Swords flashed in the sun. Men fell, were trampled down. But the cries of the wounded, the moans of the dying, every sound on that battlefield, all noise there, was drowned by the one cry, one shout:

"Kotchubey! Kotchubey!"

It grew into a roar and drowned with its volume the thunder of cannon which was coming nearer every second.

The Cossacks, who but an hour ago had been fleeing shamelessly under the pressure of the enemy, now were like men born anew. Gay and courageous and determined, and as if already intoxicated with the victory which they knew would be theirs, and shouting the name of their great leader and brandishing their swords, a mad horde they were again, mad this time with courage; thus they cut straight into the center of the Swedish army . . .

THE sun was setting when the enemy, pursued by the Russians up to Poltava, entered the town and began the retreat into Moldavia. The conquerors put up the tents on the fringes of the steppe and the Russian soldiers gathered about barrels of wine to celebrate their victory. The Cossacks joined them. They were drinking the health of their leader, whom they had thought dead, the great Kotchubey.

"And now what is going to happen to us?" demanded Kazy of the Pole who sat in his tent surrounded by the Cossacks. "Here's a messenger asking you to go to the Czar. What are you going to say to the Czar?"

Escorted by a group of mounted Russian officers whom the Czar had sent to act as guard of honor to the famous Cossack, the Pole and Kazy rode to the Czar's tent and with great pomp were ushered into his Imperial Majesty's presence. The Czar, as they entered, was standing in the middle of the tent,

talking with his generals who pressed eagerly on all sides of him.

He was very tall, broad shouldered, had large feet, great coarse hands, and his face was large, round and flabby, with wide open, somewhat bulging black eyes. His dress was very simple. A plain green coat with mother-of-pearl buttons in two rows down the front and white ruffles about the heavy-set reddish neck and huge wrists. Heavy boots, black breeches, he wore, and a small tricorn of dark green cloth. No one could have looked less like a Czar than this unique ruler as he stood there in the midst of his retinue, resplendent in their bright uniforms, their chests sparkling with the gems of numerous orders. His manner was rough, his speech blunt.

So appeared the Czar as he stood in his tent in the midst of his resplendent retinue waiting for the noble Cossack, Kotchubey. As the Pole, followed by Kazy, entered, he roughly pushed out of his way the two generals nearest to him and approached the Pole with outstretched arms.

"My dear Kotchubey!" he cried, embracing the Pole warmly. "This is the third time we meet. Will you be offended if I say that this one is the happiest of them all? If it were not for you and your gallant Cossacks! . . . But no—do not let us think about it. Terrible to imagine, even. Come," he went on, drawing the Pole to a bench. "Let's talk it over. This Mazeppa! You know he promised to help me and then suddenly went over to the Swedes. A sly old fox! But you? How did you trick him? You are supposed to be dead, you know." The Czar laughed.

"I am not Kotchubey, Sire," said the Pole.

The Czar, thinking it a joke, laughed politely, but the Pole persisted.

"Who are you, then?" demanded the Czar at last.

"A Polish gentleman, Sire. And a double of your great Kotchubey. Yes, this remarkable likeness to him saved my life some twenty years ago. It happened we met as enemies in battle. He spared my life. When I heard about his arrest and trial, I knew he was in danger, and hurried to Poltava. I am a very wealthy man and in my country, without boasting, Sire, I may say I am quite a personage. I thought I could help Kotchubey. More, I knew his life was in danger, and so it was to save Kotchubey's life that I came to Poltava. I owed him that much, you see. But I came too late. And then in Poltava every one began to take me for Kotchubey. I decided to take his place and save Ukrainia."

"But with your talents, your courage, why not enter my service?" cried the Czar. "You will grow rich. Famous! Why live in obscurity?"

"He is not in obscurity!" cried Kazy.

"Take no notice of him, Sire," said the Pole quickly. "The best of friends, but a stupid fellow. He is right, though. I am famous, in a way. I am a famous horticulturist. My specialty is roses."

"Roses!" cried the Czar, and he roared with laughter. "Please do not be offended," he said at last, wiping his eyes. "I never can conceal my feelings. A peasant, they call me. But—roses!"

He tried once more to persuade the Pole to enter his service, but gave in at last to the giant's plea to let him go, and that very night, the Polish gentleman and his servant left Poltava.

And so it happened that having reappeared so unexpectedly, Kotchubey once more disappeared from Ukrainia, this time never to return. The Czar at first believed the Polish gentleman's story, but on thinking the matter over, became convinced that Kotchubey himself had led the Cossacks to victory in the famous battle of Poltava.

In Dikanka, however, to this very day, there hangs in the private chapel of the Kotchubey descendants the blood-stained shirt of their gallant ancestor. There is also a tablet with the description of the execution and the dates. Kotchubey, it seems, had been beheaded a few days before the battle of Poltava.

An African Novelette by the

The WITCH CASTING

By GORDON MacCREAGH

KINGI *bwana* was experiencing a new sensation. It piqued him. In fact it more than merely piqued him; it nettled him. The thing was so entirely novel; it struck at an emotion against which he—so carefully poised in most things—was unguarded.

It required a grunted observation of his wise little Hottentot head-boy to bring him to a realization that he was letting himself give way to a foolish vanity.

The other two white men whose camp he was visiting had both gone into their tent; gone together by deliberate design, King thought—or rather the one had gone in and the other had deliberately followed him. Kaffa the Hottentot, who had carried the lantern for his master, huddled like a monkey in a blanket in the dim outer fringe of light; motionless, oblivious of the doings of the white lords, a creature only, without soul, ready to come when called and to go when sent—as a good head-boy should be.

Yet Kaffa in the outer circle had the acute ears of the ape that he resembled, and—wise as an ape—he had been a close intimate of his master's doings for sufficient years to have gained a rudimentary understanding of English.

Without moving, looking into the empty night, he grunted his observation.

"Those white men are as the swamp tortoise—fools who will not accept wisdom."

King continued to sit in the luxurious hammock chair under the African stars, also motionless. But he felt a slow flush creep over himself. From his face to his neck it went, and spread then uncomfortably over his whole body, even down inside his mosquito-boots. It had required just that remark of his servant to show him that he was resenting these men's brusk disdain of his experience. He burned with shame at his unguarded pettiness; and he was immeasurably glad that his servant's shrewd remark had brought him to himself.

Yet to the servant he said quietly, still without moving:

"It is ill to speak so, unasked, of white masters. One tenth of your pay for this month is fined."

"Yes, *bwana*, it is ill," murmured the Hottentot meekly.

He knew that he had transgressed. He knew, too, that by meritorious service he could win rewards during the month well overbalancing the stiff fine.

King relighted his pipe and, calmly master of himself once more, set himself

impersonally to analyze this unaccustomed thing.

Americans, these men were. King, crossing trails with them at the last little outpost settlement of M'bandele, had joyfully come over to their camp to ask eager questions of home whence they had just come and to offer his experience of whither they were going. Most men in East Africa would have absorbed that knowledge with thanksgiving; and to most men King would not have given it. But to these two from home he was willing, even anxious, to offer such information and advice as they might need.

And they—or at all events one of them intimated by his cavalier aloofness that when he needed anything out of King's experience of Africa he would ask for it.

This was a quite new experience in Africa for King.

The first man came out of the tent again and let himself wearily down into the adjoining hammock chair. This was Chester C. Howard, large framed, pale faced, tired eyed, and much too young to be legitimately so worn out after a day's trek. An invalid, King judged him to be; a tired business man perhaps, come to Africa to do some hunting in the wholesome outdoors and to give mind as well as body a rest from the frenzied fight for dollars.

This one had been inclined to be more cordial. He had listened attentively to King's proffered information about the hinterland. He sat silent now, drawing a breath every now and then as though on the point of speaking, and then letting it go again and shifting uneasily in his chair. He seemed to find difficulty in coming to a decision.

King leaned back and blew silent smoke rings at the stars, his narrow eyes apparently closed in peaceful enjoyment, but taking in every move of the other.

Decision came to Howard at last. He sat upright and set his shoulders in his overloose coat. He drew a breath again and held it. He had to force himself to say what he wanted.

"Mr. King, I was about to say just now, er—I wanted to ask you, whether you would throw in with my party and give me the benefit of your knowledge of that back country."

King remained as he was, head thrown back in his cupped hands; he lifted one eyebrow to the stars.

"I don't think you need me exactly, Mr. Howard. Mr. Gerardi seems to know his way about pretty well."

The other, having come to his hard won decision, clung to it still.

"Oh, yes, by all means, Dr. Gerardi has safaried extensively in South Africa and in Rhodesia; but he doesn't know that Uganda-Sudan border country. Er—if your fee—forgive me if I put it crudely—I'm fortunate, I suppose, in that money doesn't—what I mean is, from what I've heard of you, Mr. King, I'd be glad to pay you whatever—"

At this juncture the other man came out. He bulked large in the dim triangle of the tent flap. A well set up man with an easy confidence in his hearty manner. He took the third chair and spread his robust legs before him in comfort.

The invalid still clung desperately to his decision.

"I was just telling Mr. King, John; er—I was asking him if he'd care to join us."

The other laughed in loud good humor.

"That's a hell of a compliment to me, Chet. Anybody would think I was a new born tenderfoot."

"No, no, I don't mean that, John. You know I don't. Only, your knowledge of that border country is, on your own admission, hearsay; and you've told me yourself that the big thing about hunting is to know where to look for game. Now Mr. King here—"

The other laughed good humoredly again.

"Good old embarrassed Chet. Heavens, you can't make me mad by getting another man to take a lot of the respon-

sibility off my shoulders. I'll be only too glad to get some more time for shooting. But suppose you talk to him about it in the morning. As your physician, I think your medicine and your camp cot are about due."

The invalid subsided. He was clearly, and quite properly, under the dominance of his friend, physician and expedition leader.

"I suppose you're right," he acquiesced. "I'm not properly on my feet yet. You'll excuse me, Mr. King, won't you?"

His loose clothes flapped about him as he went obediently to the tent. King prepared to go to his own camp. Dr. Gerardi was heartily apologetic

"Sorry you couldn't settle your business tonight, old man; but I don't have to tell you what a lot of details would have to be talked over. We'll be seeing you in the morning, I suppose. I'll send a boy over for you when Howard is up. Good night."

The voice was cordial and the confident dark eyes were smiling. But King felt that there was more of triumph in the smile than cordiality.

He returned to his camp with long thoughtful strides. There was something queer there. Once he muttered to himself—

"The devil you'll send a boy for me in the morning!"

He knew that by the next morning the invalid's decision to hire his services would have been very thoroughly changed for him. If the little Hottentot pattering ahead of him with the lantern had any thoughts he kept them wisely to himself.

In his own tent King saw his face in the little mirror that hung on the center pole. A thin vertical line between his brows, eyes very narrow, mouth compressed hard and drawn down at the corners. He looked at it in frank astonishment; then he laughed at it.

"Shucks, what a fool I am," he grunted to himself. And retrospectively, "What a fool that doctor is too; I wonder do I look to him like I want to steal his job of millionaire herding."

He laughed again, genuinely this time, and he stretched his long corded arms above his head till the shoulder sinews cracked. For him the incident was closed.

OF COURSE, no boy came over in the morning to call King to any discussion. By morning the rich man had changed his mind about the need of that much extra experience. Or rather, his tired mind had been changed for him; and King didn't altogether blame the doctor either; he himself in charge of an expedition would have resented the sudden inclusion of a rival.

He shrank from drawing attention to himself, as though begging to be sent for; so he stayed within his own tent while the other safari packed up and got under way.

A safari departure was no uncommon occurrence at the little mud and corrugated iron village of M'bandele; yet the complete population turned out, as it always did, to stand around and comment and gossip and—the native boys—to scramble for discarded tomato cans.

Kaffa, the Hottentot, and Barounggo, King's big Masai porter driver, stood together and submitted the safari to expert discussion; Kaffa, shriveled, amazingly wrinkled, huddled in a gaudy blanket; the Masai nakedly immense, dressed only in a twist of leopard skin loincloth and monkey hair garters at knee and elbow. He leaned on his great spear and laughed deeply in his chest at the little Hottentot's acid comments.

According to the little fellow's reasoning these people had offered insult to his master by not leaping to engage him. Loyally, therefore, he disliked them. Furthermore, they had cost him a fine of one-tenth of his pay. So presently he was the center of an admiring group who tittered and slapped their thighs at each sally of keen and crude native wit.

At last everything was packed and

bundled, and in not too long a time; the doctor man had certainly traveled before. King came out of his tent then. There was no room left now for misunderstanding or embarrassment. These people definitely did not want him and the matter was closed. Any feeling about the thing would have been absurd on either side.

Most particularly these were Americans, countrymen of King's. Friendliness was therefore almost a rite. Among the dwellers of this outpost village were sundry British-Indian halfbreeds, a Greek trader or two, and an English-Africander sergeant of police. Anything less than extreme cordiality between compatriots far from home would have been most unseemly.

So King came out and shook hands all round and wished them luck and passed on the last word information about water holes; and natives shouted farewells and told the safari porters scare stories about lions in that back country; and everybody laughed and waved; and the Hottentot giggled inordinately; and the big safari departed with the proper éclat.

It was not until evening, until the safari was a full day's march distant, that the Hottentot raised a sudden outcry. He had lost his most precious possession.

Every African boy—every one, that is, who hopes to work for a white man—treasures above all things his letter of recommendation; for without one it is difficult to get any save the most menial jobs at manual labor.

Every house boy, tent boy, head boy, safari man, has a greasy scrap or two of worn paper that sets forth his recommendations above the signature of some forgiving past time master. The smart ones have several such. The too smart ones carry a whole sheaf of them—neatly typed on stolen official stationery by Eurasian clerks—bearing the carefully done signatures of generals and famous travelers and governors of colonies. It would astonish the ghost of Colonel Roosevelt to know how many absurdly young boys he had personally employed. These clever ones wait at the ports and the outfitting stations for the ever increasing tide of rich travelers who come out every season to do their Africa.

No such letter had Kaffa the Hottentot. He had never had a master other than King; never hoped to have another. But since every good boy had at least one such letter of recommendation he felt his dignity to be incomplete without a similar witness of his worth, and so had begged King to give him one. Now he wailed its loss. But complacently he besought his master:

"But *bwana* will give me another one, yes? For, barring that matter of having spoken disrespectfully of those two white lords, I am indeed a very good head boy."

"There have been times," said King, "few and long ago, when you have been not worse than a well trained grass monkey. But I will give you another. Though how can a man not a fool lose such a paper?"

"True, *bwana,* a wise man does not lose such a paper. But, *awai,* I have suspicion that it has been stolen from my bundle."

"Huh," grunted King. "Who in this place could steal anything from so wise an ape as Kaffa?"

The Hottentot wriggled in his blanket and then assumed an expression of preternatural innocence, whereat his master immediately regarded him with suspicion.

"*Bwana,* it is ill to speak ill of any man—I have learned. Yet I have suspicion. That boy Umbobo, whom *bwana* dismissed for thieving, was in this village."

"Umbobo, hey?" King was interested. "Why, that slick scamp could steal anything; and he knows how to plant his loot with every bush chief along the road, and how to gouge it back from him too. But—" suspiciously again—"why would he steal your paper?

Why don't you take Barounggo and beat him and get your paper back? What is all this outcry about nothing?"

The Hottentot was the very embodiment of a wistful monkey.

"Alas, *bwana,* he was here. He is now gone."

King began to see light.

"Gone where? Tell me truth now, imp."

The Hottentot's artless innocence was that of a wizened ape.

"I think, *bwana,* he must have gone with that safari; for indeed I saw him talking with the great white lord of whom it is ill to speak ill; not the sick one, the strong one whose hair is smooth like the chi-m'panze and whose eyes are keen and set close in his face—"

King was forced to an effort to keep an immobile face at the cunningly uncomplimentary description. The Hottentot looked everywhere in the air except at his master's expressionless face.

"I have suspicion, *bwana*—I am afraid that that evil boy stole my paper in order to take my name and to—to—" He could hold that innocence no longer. He writhed in fearful effort; but the giggle burst from him in shrill falsetto.

"Keh-heh-heh-heh—in order to gain employment with that white lord. Keh-heh-heh-heeh-heeh!"

"Phew!" King whistled. "That boy will loot himself rich out of that outfit."

And then suddenly he knew; and on the instant, with a sudden movement, before the Hottentot could leap out of reach, he shot a long arm out and had the boy by the scruff of the neck.

"Devil's whelp!" he shouted. "Bush baboon! You gave him that letter. By wicked design you gave it to him."

"Nay, *bwana.*" The imp squirmed under King's two hands in the air. "Not so. I did not give it to him. By the great rock snake, I swear it."

That oath with the Hottentot meant truth. King let go of his neck. The boy writhed again and stretched it ruefully from his blanket folds like a tortoise. Then he giggled again and quoted with sententious virtue:

"In the wisdom of my people is a true saying. 'The headstrong man runs his head into the unavoidable snare of justice.' Keh-heh-heh-heh, those white lords ought to have taken *bwana* who has experience of such things."

King reached quickly for the graceless scamp again; but he had already scuttled out of reach. To have chased him would have been derogatory to white man's dignity.

"Tell truth now, scoundrel," said King. "Or you can go seek service with your paper. How did that Umbobo boy get that paper?"

The Hottentot scuttled farther.

"Nay, *bwana,* I—it was but justice for the insult to *bwana's* knowledge—I rented it to him. He is a great thief, but he is honest; he will bring it back."

"For how much?" demanded King grimly.

The Hottentot twisted in desperate abashment, like a boy who must confess a mischief before omnipotent authority. He stood on one leg and scratched himself in an extremity of nervousness with the toes of the other. Unable to meet the boring eyes of his master, he mumbled at last—

"For one-tenth of the amount of my month's pay, *bwana.*"

"So?" said King evenly. "Bush imp. It is therefore justice that I fine you another tenth."

DEPUTY Commissioner Fawcett, dining on his veranda in all the solitary formality of evening dress, rose with alacrity to meet the tall figure that loomed suddenly up out of the dim veranda steps.

"Damn those boys," he grumbled. "Why didn't they tell me you were here? But I was rather expecting you to come and make serious *indaba.*"

King relaxed into a cane chair, stretched his khaki breeched legs luxuriously on its long arms and lighted his pipe before speaking, ignoring the

little matter of his unannounced presence.

"Serious stuff? My conscience is clear of anything that your fussy old government can bother me for."

The commissioner chuckled; he was immensely pleased.

"What, what? Have I been getting something that you haven't heard yet? That begins to be news in itself, my dark and devious Kingi."

King blew smoke at the ceiling.

"Lots of things you ought to hear before I do, you with all your official sources."

"Ought to, yes," said the deputy commissioner dryly. "But this isn't your trouble, my dear chap, though it's going to be."

King was vehemently positive.

"Nothing doing a-tall, Dipty *bwana*. I'm free and guiltless and I'm going Rudolf side to meet a Palestinian friend of mine from Abyssinia to whom I owe thousands of sacks of dust gold—if he's smart enough to build a trade."

The deputy was equally positive.

"All the same, it's going to be your *shauri*, old man. First of all, though this has nothing to do with it, there's been a man hanging about here for some days, waiting to see you. A native. That's how I knew you were coming."

"That's pretty damn good official deduction." King grinned. "Wouldn't he tell established authority what he wanted, and go away?"

The deputy chuckled again.

"He wouldn't even tell me he wanted to see you. But he has three cicatrices on each shoulder and a row of six across his chest. So—"

King let his long legs quietly down from the chair and pushed himself upright. Then to cover that movement he rather ostentatiously relighted his pipe.

"And so," continued the deputy slowly, "I thought he might be some *tagati* man from that old witch doctor friend of yours at Elgon Mountain. Batete the Old One, they call him, I understand; and he carved that pipe bowl especially for you?"

King sat all the way up.

"Fawcett, *bwana*," he nodded softly—"you're learning so much about dark and devious Africa that you won't be any damn good as an official presently."

The deputy flushed with pleasure at the back handed compliment.

"Well, my Kingi, it was you who taught me how to listen in. But I'm officially handicapped; those fellows won't talk to my men like they do to you."

"I must go see this *tagati* neophyte," said King. "His news is probably vastly more important than this trouble of yours that I'm not going to mix into."

"All the same you will, my cocksure Kingi. And this time I have no hesitation in asking you. They are your compatriots, not mine."

"Huh?"

King stood up and paced the veranda with long silent steps.

"Who is in here at all—except—?"

The deputy nodded.

"Millionaire safari. They're up in the Dodinga country, beyond the big thorn swamp. A deuce of a place to get to. I'm really sorry for you, old chap, because speed is an important factor and all round the swamp is a long way."

"Good Lord!" groaned King. "Why should I have to mix into their troubles? They didn't want me from the start. I met them going in two months ago. And they ought not to be having any bother anyhow; the leader man knows African travel aplenty. Why don't you wire Kitgum to send a police sergeant? He can work around the western end of that filthy bog and get into Dodinga country all sweet and pretty."

The deputy laughed. He was quite sure of his ground.

"Kitgum is two weeks farther away than you can make it through the swamp; and you know how these smoldering native troubles can suddenly flare up into tragedy. I have two native policemen stationed up there as it is. They send a rambling and quite incoherent

report about black magic and witchcraft, from which I can make out only that a white man is sick from some queer thing that looks like a magic killing. And if you're going north anyway, it won't be more than a couple of weeks out of your way. And since they're your own silly people, and—"

King could see himself being overwhelmed by sheer mass of argument. He sprang to his feet and made to go away.

"Oh, shut up!" he shouted. "Why did I have to come along? I could just as well have gone to the Rudolf water by way of Lokri and Naüra. Witchcraft, you say? Is there any connection, d'you suppose? Where can I see this young *tagati* man?"

"I fancy—" Fawcett, who was growing to be very wise, smiled—"that if you just go outside my gate and stand in the dark he'll jolly well appear in quick time. And I'll have some dinner warmed up for you."

Fifteen minutes later King stood silently in the veranda again. He nodded morosely.

"You were right. And it clicks. There's some fool of a witch doctor up there who seems to be horning in on white man affairs. So Old Batete sends to remind me of favors he had done in the past."

Fawcett nodded, too, with understanding.

"And he knows that, while we have to keep shuteye on native spellbindery, if they start fooling with white men it will jolly well bring a bee's nest about the ears of the whole brotherhood. So that's two reasons for making this thing your *shauri*."

"What a mess," grumbled King. "I wonder whether this *tagati* can get a message to my Palestine date to meet me somewhere else? Sometimes they can."

The deputy commissioner nodded in sober agreement.

"Yes, sometimes they beat the telegraph; and it's too often to be guesswork. Some day I'm going to find out how this mysterious communication is done."

King laughed shortly.

"If you do—which you will not—you'd know the dim beginnings of all the queer things in Africa which no white man will ever know. Me, I'm glad enough that sometimes I can get them pulling for me instead of dead against. You, Dipty *bwana*, you'll never get them pulling for you; for the simple and unchangeable reason that you're an official of the white man's government that insists upon trying to make the black man in his own country do things the way the white man thinks is right in his country."

The deputy laughed in turn.

"And that is the reason, my Kingi, why you can do this thing better than a policeman from Kitgum; and plain brotherly love for your own troublesome people practically forces the nasty job on to your shoulders."

KING was in the middle of the great swamp and in vile humor. No brotherly love for his countrymen sweetened his disposition. He cursed them as he grumbled:

"I knew it would be a filthy job, and it's twice all of that. I'd let them go hang and get themselves stuffed full of spears like a porcupine, only that commissioner fellow would jeer me for the rest of my life that his crowd never let their own people down; and they're plenty ready to high hat us as it is. Barounggo. Hey, Barounggo, get those men spread out more, and prod any fool in the tail who isn't careful."

Swamp did not mean by any means an endless morass. It meant, rather, muddy pools and soggy paths intersected by oozy runlets between higher ridges of dry ground covered with a dense shrubbery of all the thorns known to Africa and inhabited by mosquitoes and huge gray leeches that knew how to search out the lace holes of high boots and swell up like red striped gooseberries.

In this maze one of King's men was lost, a stupid *shenzie* who with the animal dumbness of the African porter had disregarded the strict instructions to keep together.

Some men would have gone on, leaving the native to follow, excusing themselves on the perfectly sound ground of the health—and possibly the life—of the whole safari. King knew how a man might be incapacitated by any one of a hundred different accidents and might lie for days before crawling things in their myriads would finally submerge his ever weakening struggles.

King's consideration for his fellow humans was of the practical kind that made him stay in the swamp and search for the lost man; but that, at the same time, grimly promised itself that if the man were not pretty deathly sick from his hurt when they found him, he would be so from the very proper beating that would be his due for getting stupidly lost.

Kaffa the Hottentot shouted directions to a *shenzie* to work out toward the left and to search in the direction of a scraggy sentinel tamarisk tree. The man made his slow, unwilling way in the direction indicated; and there he suddenly stood shouting, waving uncouth arms. Others scouting in far flung line scrambled, splashed, pole vaulted toward him. King came up to them as they stood in a bovine semicircle, heads stretched forward in fearful fascination, eyes rolling.

Splay footed tracks led to a brown scummy pool; web footed tracks came out of it. Kaffa the Hottentot could read that story like heavy face type,

"Look, *bwana*. Here that fool stood to look. *Awai*, what a madness he must have eaten! Here it rushed forth and seized him. Rearing high, it seized him by the hand—for see, his both feet still show. Here he struggled, screaming.

"For ten minutes he struggled, for it was a small one. But in the end it was stronger than he and it pulled him in. And that all happened just four hours ago."

King nodded as he followed the sign reading.

"How do you place the time, O wise little ape?" he wondered.

Kaffa giggled, delighted to show off his astuteness.

"Four hours ago, as *bwana* sat to eat, the marsh plovers rose with a great screaming at this place. For ten minutes they screamed before they settled. It came to me just now that the spirits of this evil swamp, who must be many and strong, caused the birds to rise in order to cover up the cries of that man whom they had marked for their own."

King nodded again, soberly, with set lips. Here was just another of those mischances, seemingly fortuitous combinations of circumstances, under which the dark gods of Africa exacted their toll.

"That was a good reading," he told the Hottentot. "For that one-half of your one-tenth fine is remitted. Barounggo, make those *shenzies* understand that there is no profit in staying to hunt that crocodile for blood payment; and ammunition is getting low anyhow. Give them instead out of No. 3 pack a piece of red cloth to hang up for his ghost; and then up packs and trek; and one inch of spear point in the rump for him who straggles."

It was a little thing, a piece of red cloth. Yet in that kind of little thing lay the secret of King's phenomenal speed of travel that left so many other safari conductors wondering. His porters knew he was a merciless driver when it was necessary or convenient to his desires and that the very practical persuasion of a spear prick would be the immediate penalty for any disobedience of orders or shirking of the hardest kind of work; but they knew, too, that in really important matters, such as the proper propitiation of the host of spirits that haunted their dark lives, their master was lenient and gave in to them.

So that in two more days the safari came out of that swamp, whole and well,

into the higher rolling plain country of the Dodinga tribes.

A NEW worry was now on hand to drive the vertical furrow deep between King's brows and to send him toiling up every other outcrop of tumbled rock —uncomfortable lion roosts in the heat of the sun—to scour the undulating skyline with prism glasses.

He had an appointment with his friend Yakoub ben Abrahm the trader. He owed him certain information, promised in return for a previous trade. That appointment had been for a place many days' march to the east. Was it possible, then, that word had somehow been conveyed—by signal drum or smoke or whatever hokum the witch doctors practised—to the other man to edge his route over and meet north of the big swamp?

The thing had been known to happen. King's hope was that the mysterious signals of the African "underground" had this time worked for him instead of, as a white man, directly against him.

And this time they had. News at the first little cluster of thorn fenced huts was that a white man had arrived at a village half a day's journey distant. King's hope rose almost to conviction. This should surely be his appointment; for white men were not frequent in that country. He hurried on. He wanted to meet his friend, explain the change of plan and beg a few days' indulgence while he went on to the scene of the other white men's trouble.

The first distant look at the little encampment told him that this was indeed his trader friend and no other. A disgraceful tent stood in lopsided disarray; oddments of cloth fluttered from its guy ropes, dish rags and clothing; baggage lay about in confusion; porter men lolled.

At King's halloo the man himself appeared. A patriarch out of a scriptural print. Unkempt, grizzled hair hung over his high forehead in wisps, a beard with the first silver threads beginning to show grew up to his cheek bones. Eyes black and alert as a bird's peered from under tangled brows as from the thatch eaves of a roof. A great eagle nose thrust out under them.

The man threw both his hands heavenward in querulous complaint.

"What is this, Meester Kingi? What do you do to me? A black man comes to my camp many days ago and tells my servant that another black man tells him that you do not come as agreed but come to this place. No letter, no sign of recognition, nothing. Is this the way to do business? But I know you have dealings with the devil, so I came. And now what?"

King pulled one of the protesting hands out of the air and pressed it.

"Sorry, Yakoub, old grouch. This was important and none of my own doings."

But the other was not yet ready to be mollified.

"There is always something important with you that is none of your business; that is why you are not long ago rich. But I tell you, my friend, you do me a wrong. I am no wild safari runner of the wilderness. I am a trader, a man of the settlements. I do not like this. I am afraid of these people with their nakedness and their wicked rolling eyes and their weapons. Ha, here is your great fellow, Barounggo, with his frightful spear; he makes one feel safe. But come in, come in. A black man out of nowhere came and told me you were coming; so there is a stew of young kid with red peppers and garlic. Come in, and you shall tell me what new madness it is this time that claims your attention and wastes my time."

King laughed in contentment over the ready meal.

"And yet, old cynic, you believed that black man who came four hours ago. Although four hours ago we had just reached the first of the villages; and no black man has outrun us that fast."

The Jew was immediately suspicious

of a trick.

"How do you know he came four hours ago?"

King grinned as delightedly as his own Hottentot might have done.

"It is four hours ago that you must have started this good stew that you remembered I liked. I wish your man could teach my Kaffa how to make it. But Kaffa says your people put snakes into it; and his people of course are children of the great rock snake."

The Jew snorted.

"Your Kaffa is a child of the seventh hell. But all that is not business. Tell me the reason of all this troublesome wandering in the desert."

King told him briefly while he ate, and produced in conclusion his own excuse to himself, that the British deputy commissioner would hold it against him if he did not go to the help of his own people.

THE Jew looked at him intently. And then he threw out his hands in a gesture of helplessness and cackled shrill laughter.

"And that is what you want me to believe for the whole reason? Listen, my friend, and I shall tell you about yourself. That reason, yes, it is a part of it; for it is born in those Englishmen to condescend over the rest of us, even when they like us. But I know your people too, and I tell you this: The best way to cheat an American is first to persuade him that you are from his home town; and the farther away you are from your home town, the wider you are ready to increase its boundaries; till finally in the wilderness you embrace your whole country. Yes, yes, I know, I have dealt with many of your people. You are all children as yet. I know because we too—" cynicism gave way to more sober introspection—"my people too are in the same manner clannish. We feel that we, scattered over the earth, must help each other. You do it because you are very young; we, because we are very old. *Aie, aie,* yes; it is in your country that we find understanding. Tell me more of this madness that you undertake for your people."

King told him as much as he knew and hazarded—

"I suppose that this physician man, feeling that he knows everything about Africa, and being naturally a rather conceited and overbearing sort of a cuss, has contrived to tread somehow on the toes of the local witch doctor quite heavily; and so the wizard has just set about praying him to death."

"You don't believe in that yourself," said the other quickly.

King's eyes narrowed and looked into distance.

"I don't know, Yakoub; I'm hanged if I know just what I believe in Africa. With natives, maybe, yes. You know the old theory that the native must know about it first; though Old Batete swears that that isn't necessary. But that's neither here nor there. There are other things; things that even the medicos know exist, yet they don't know anything about."

"What things?"

King shrugged, somberly frowning.

"Many things. As just one possibility I'll mention poisons. I know almost nothing; but I know this much, or this little. There's a root the witch men call *acca.* Thoroughly boiled it is harmless; but parboiled it is poison. They dry and pulverize crocodile gall; and that's a poison. A splinter from a tree they call *ujungu* is poison. There's a striped beetle called *isi-bunu.* An infusion of that in hot water is poison. And there's half a dozen other deadly secrets of the same sort."

The Jew looked at him with the fixed eyes of a bird fascinated by a snake. Softly he muttered:

"Truly, my friend, you have dealings with the more hidden devils of Africa. And you think then that—"

He left the sentence unfinished. King took it up.

"I don't know what I think. I don't

know how any of those poisons work. Medical men say that there's no such thing as a slow poison; but I'll make a guess that any witch doctor knows a dozen poisons that our medicos don't; and I'll guess further that many a wizard knows how to administer some of his poisons in small doses and to wrap up the whole process in a hokum of mumbo-jumbo about magicking his victim to death. So this white man, whatever sickness is eating him, may well be wasting away from something a darn sight more practical than evil eye."

The Jew clawed sensitive fingers through his beard the while his troubled eyes roamed about and around his shabby little tent, as though looking for something, searching for some escape out of this dark entanglement. Suddenly he shot the question at King:

"And you, my friend, you propose to thrust yourself into this black business that is none of your business? To go to pit yourself against the one most secret, powerful thing in Africa which the white man has never been able to eradicate? You who know a little something of these evil currents that flow under the surfaces?"

"Gosh, I got to go," said King. "The deputy commissioner said the man was already taken with the mysterious sickness before I came away; and I don't know how slow or how fast these things work. The man may be wasted past all help already. But I've go to go and see."

The Jew nodded, quite dismally; and with conviction laid down his opinion.

"You are very foolish, my stubborn friend, and very brave—which is a result of foolishness. And when you have trampled your way into this morass what do you propose to do?"

King's wide shoulders shrugged with a nervous irritation.

"Gosh, I don't know, Yakoub. I'm all in the dark. I've got to go and try and find out just what it is that's happening and who's involved—and then ferret out who is the wizard who's doing the mischief and then—those fellows often have antidotes to their various hokums—to see if I can twist his tail somehow and make him call it all off."

The Jew sat still, nodding, staring into a darkly prophetic future, his slender fingers combing his beard. Snatches of sentences mumbled between his lips.

"Foolish, princely foolish. Just that little thing—to smash into African witchcraft about which we know nothing except that it is bad, and secret, and revengeful. *Aie-aie* what a business. There is no profit in such a foolishness."

Suddenly the hands flung upward in a gesture of despair; the shoulders shrugged up to the ears; the thick eyebrows disappeared into the low tangle of hair and the lips drew down in a sour grimace.

"I don't like it, Meester obstinate Kingi. I have always been afraid of these meddlings into the dark undercurrent of Africa. We shall probably both be drawn into that current along with your other foolish compatriot who has already meddled, and we shall sicken of something that we do not understand. But—"

The gesture and the deepened grimace finished the sentence. King laughed with quick relief.

"But, Yakoub, you don't have to mix into this mess. You just stay right here for a week, maybe two weeks—the water in this village isn't bad. And when I come back I'll take and introduce you to the various chiefs who control these little collections of gold dust, all exactly as I promised, and you can organize whatever business you think you can. All I ask is that you excuse my appointment with you and give me a couple of weeks' extension."

The hands descended from the air, but the Jew's expression remained one of extreme disgust.

"All you ask?" he grumbled. "When you are already committed to your Kingly foolishness. What use. Besides, you are too foolish and too obstinate for me to let you shove yourself into this

black business all by yourself. I must be along to restrain you; otherwise you will never come back to lead me to my gold dust."

King laughed again; this time throatily with a quick warmth of feeling. He tried to be firm.

"Yakoub, you're a good old grouch. But I can't let you run into this danger on my account. I—I'll be all right. You just stick here and—"

The hands pushed the suggestion away with the extremity of impatience.

"*Na, na,* don't talk more foolishness. It is not on your account; it is for my gold dust. And—" with a sudden resumption of birdlike alertness—"for gold, my friend, throughout all time my people have run into dangers that have made history. Who am I to expect any easier fate?"

KING was traveling light and fast. Only his Hottentot and two strong porters accompanied him. Himself, he had been looking upon this trouble of the two misguided Americans as not much more than an unpleasant tangle requiring for its straightening out a knowledge of native character, a little strong arm work perhaps, and maybe a present or two to soothe the ruffled feelings of some local wizard. It was the dark forebodings of the trader, more sensitive than himself to the under surface of trickery, that had rendered him uneasily anxious to get to the scene of the doings, whatever they might be, as soon as possible.

He left the big Masai and the rest of his safari with Yakoub. His last instructions had been:

"Barounggo, this man is worthy of regard. See that he travels in comfort, and beat some order into those boys of his so that they may know how a safari should be."

And Barounggo had lifted his great spear in salute and growled:

"*Nidio bwana,* it is an order. It will be three days, maybe four, traveling with these untrained savages, before we come up with you. But upon arrival the safari will be as *bwana's* own."

King did not know just what he might find at the white men's camp; what queer trickery might be going on, shaping up, as the deputy commissioner had said, for a magic killing. At best he expected to find this Dr. Gerardi mysteriously sick from some ailment that quite baffled his own medical knowledge.

But he found only surprise. Almost a pleasant surprise.

The camp was all in good order; well set up in the shade of two immense baobab trees. A good pool of clear water formed a pleasant oasis of green bush and ferns. The thorn boma round the camp was strong and high. Native villages were not too close. Game tracks were plentiful. The doctor certainly did not lack experience in African ways.

And the man himself—to King, in his preconceived expectation, he was almost a shock. Big and strong and in the best of health, he greeted King cordially and without a care on his mind.

"Hello, Mr. King, how are you? If we had known when we met you a couple of months back that you had business in this part of the land we might have joined forces anyway. I heard you were headed this way only a couple of days ago, so I expected you would drop in."

And that in itself was almost a shock again. The man heard that King was coming. That meant that he was at least in not unfriendly communication with the native gossip that so often preheralded news of importance in their own little affairs. If he had been marked down for any sort of magical vengeance he would have been surrounded by a dense blank wall of ignorance of everything that happened anywhere; he would have met only empty bovine stares in the villages, porters would have deserted, hunters would have been impossible to find, even chickens and eggs would not have been forthcoming. Aloofness and fear would have been in

the atmosphere. Yet this pleasant camp seemed to have plenty of everything.

King was on the point of blurting out the cause of his coming, the mysterious report of trouble that had come to the deputy commissioner. Only that cordiality of the doctor's gave him pause. The man had been cordial in the same expansive manner when they had first met two months ago; on that occasion he had quite definitely influenced his wealthy friend to give up the thought of employing King. The smile, too, in those compelling, too close set eyes, was not as truly impersonal as the casual words of greeting tried to imply.

King decided to keep his information to himself for the present. Clearly he had been mistaken in his premise. There was nothing the matter with this man; no mysterious sickness ailed him. The trouble must be with the other one—though how that mild mannered invalid, so completely under the influence of his physician, could have roused the malignant antagonism of some black magician was another mystery. That one was not to be seen; sick, possibly, in his tent.

King inquired after him. The doctor laughed easily

"Chet? Oh, he's having the time of his life. This open air stuff is just what he needed to set him up. He's out somewhere with a couple of the trackers. You'll see him at dinner—you'll stay, I suppose, and take *potio* with us?"

And there was another blow to the conviction that had brought King hotfoot to the supposed rescue of his compatriots. Chet Howard out with the trackers? The man who used to be so exhausted after a short day's trek? In that case neither could he be wasting away from any mysterious ailment.

There was mystery in the sheer lack of mystery. Could it be, King wondered, that the two native policemen had become stupidly panicky about some ineffectual mumbo-jumbo and had thereupon sent in a baseless report of spellbinding built largely out of their African imaginations?

But then there had been the corroborative report brought to him by that disciple of wise Old Batete who could foresee a universal trouble in any meddling with white men.

Those two policemen would have to be interviewed. But they, King knew, were stationed at the head chief's village of the Doginga tribes, two days' distant. To the doctor's invitation to stay long enough to take dinner he replied:

"Sure, and thanks a lot. I guess I'll be staying around here a few days. I've got to wait for my partner to catch up. We're not hunting; so we won't be spoiling your sport; we're on a gold dust deal a bit farther east. I'll make camp across the other side of the water hole, if it's all the same to you."

And the doctor said:

"Oh, good indeed. It will be nice to have company for awhile. And there's any amount of game around here anyhow; you won't be bothering us, meat hunting. Come around about sundown then, yes?"

KING, as he thoughtfully selected a camping place, wondered just how much of all that the doctor had meant. The man was cordial—not effusive to a stranger, but friendly to a countryman in a far land—completely at his ease, and astonishingly well. But—

King did not know, but what?

Kaffa, engrossed in camp preparations directing the two *shenzies* in clearing off bush and stacking up a thorn boma, shrilly abusing their clumsiness, busy as an ant, found time to stop near his master and, speaking into the distant air—

"That great white lord whose eyes are like the black mamba but of whom it is ill to speak ill is not glad that we are here."

That was King's own vague suspicion; though he could not as yet place his finger upon any definite sign to justify his impression, unless upon the Hotten-

tot's acute description of the man.

"In what sign do you read that, O impertinent monkey?" he asked.

Kaffa, wriggling his toes in the dust, gave his observation.

"There is no sign, *bwana.* Only—the word came two days ago that we were on the road and on that day that white lord was angry for all day and beat his servants for no cause."

"So?" King stared frowningly across the far rolling plain, feet wide apart, thumbs in his belt, squinting into the sun. Quite inconsequentially he said:

"Let the *boma* be a strong one. There are lions somewhere in that rock *kloof.*"

"Yes, *bwana,*" the Hottentot agreed. "I too have seen the zebra sniff and toss their heads and trot away." And equally inconsequentially he added, "The witch doctor of this place is a lion man."

King continued to squint narrow eyed into the sun. He was forced to a hard little laugh.

"So you know why we are here, most cunning of imps?"

The Hottentot shuffled uncomfortably, as though detected in a crime almost of eavesdropping. With his bare toes he scuffled up a pebble and with a quick jerk of his ankle threw it at a shining skink lizard.

"No, *bwana,* I do not know. That is, not exactly. I know only that that *tagati* disciple of Batete the Wise One brought word that there was a witch casting. He did not know what kind of a witch casting, only that it was a strong one that was making a trouble for these white men; and we know, Barounggo and I, that it is *bwana's* fate that where trouble is there he must go."

"Huh," was King's grunted comment to that observation of his henchman. "So Barounggo knows also?"

"Yes, *bwana,* Barounggo knows." And then with a sudden rush of candor, "And the *shenzies* also know. They would have run away; for the word was that this was a strong witchcraft. But we know that *bwana* is himself a master of wisdom and that he has a strong protection from Batete against all wizardries. So Barounggo said that he would not put spear to any man who thought to run away, but would break him like firewood over his knee. So they came."

King remained silent, interested only in the doings of the distant zebras round that rocky hill. It would be impolitic to express any surprise; though these occasional disclosures, like stolen peeps through a dark window, never ceased to amaze him about the tortuous reasonings of the black man and the intense emotions and fears that went on right under the white man's nose all unbeknown to him—by most white men never even suspected. King therefore said only in a quite impartial tone:

"That was good. There will be a strong ox for Barounggo's father when we next come into his country. It is a promise."

"Yes, *bwana,* it will be remembered," said the Hottentot. "And I, too, am a very good servant—but there is more to that tale. That man in the swamp, that *shenzie* who got lost, he would not believe that *bwana* had a protection against the wizardries, and he was hoping that in that place he could hide and we would not look for him and so he would escape. But when the spirits of that place gave him to the crocodile it was clear that the protection covered all of *bwana's* doings. So the rest of the *shenzies* are now without fear. Only the *shenzies* of that other white man, the wise old one who comes after us, they would like to know whether the protection covers them also."

This time King could not refrain from a thin whistle; and he covered it immediately with a tuneless continuation of disharmonies through his teeth. Would he, or any other white man, ever understand the weird twists of black man's thought? And with what a casualness came these rare and priceless gems of information!

"Those men are covered," he told the Hottentot evenly. "That is why I left

Barounggo in order that the spirits might know. I see no witch casting in this place against these white men. But we will stay a few days; and if your eyes are like the snake that does not sleep and your ears like the Semmering gazelle there may be a very small piece of cloth for you."

"Yes, *bwana*," said the Hottentot. "It will be remembered."

KING strolled over to the other camp for dinner, prepared to be surprised at the condition of the man Howard. But, at that, he had underestimated. Howard, like the doctor, radiated good health. He was brown and cheerful. His loose clothes had filled out considerably during the two months in the open and the real bulk of the man showed beneath. He was full of enthusiasm.

"This is just what I needed, this open air stuff. I was running all to pieces. But this life without any business worries, and this climate!" He laughed and flexed his arms and drew a deep breath. "Gee, I feel like twenty years old. I can do anything."

The man was full of confidence; and he was grateful too.

"I owe a tremendous lot to John here. I would have cracked up in harness; but he persuaded me that a few months of these backwoods where I couldn't get any mail or telegrams or damned telephones were imperative if I wanted to keep my mind; and he was dead right. I feel as husky and carefree as any native."

The doctor murmured a conventional disclaim of the enthusiastic tribute. But Howard was not to be denied.

"Oh, yes, John, you know I'd never have broken away if you hadn't almost hypnotized me into it. I owe it all to you. I'd have been just about dead by this time; and now look at me; I've forgotten all about business and I can go around just like any black man who has never been sick in his life."

The doctor laughed, a little uneasily, King thought.

"Chet is having such a revulsion from civilized worries that he's going native," he explained.

"Sure thing," boasted Howard. "I can sleep on the ground and paddle around barefoot, just like when I was a youngster."

King sat up alert.

"Say, but you can't do that," he said quickly. "You'll be getting yourself full of hookworm; and while tsetse fly isn't bad here you can't take chances with sleeping sickness. The doctor can tell you that better than I can."

"Yes," agreed the doctor. "But Chet is getting to be very obstinate."

King remembered their first meeting when the doctor's wishes entirely controlled his patient. The doctor found it necessary to explain the change.

"With his health Chet is getting back some of that don't-give-a-damn determination that put him where he is in business—and that, incidentally, brought him to the verge of a nervous breakdown, because he wouldn't listen to me or to anybody else."

"Well, I listen to you now, don't I?" said Howard. "And you admit that there was never anything organically wrong with me; it was just my nerves all shot to pieces. And it's your theory that a white man in good health and condition can do anything that a black man can do, and usually do it better."

"Don't you ever fool yourself," said King. "No white man can do things that a native can do with impunity. They've been building up a resistance for generations that civilization has been losing. And the first instance of that is drinking water. Don't you ever get thinking that you can drink out of the same contaminated puddle that a native can."

And then it came to him suddenly that it was the doctor who should be telling his patient these things. And the doctor said quickly:

"Yes, I've told him that. He's careful about water; but he does everything else;

he goes hunting with them without a gun and all that sort of foolishness."

"And why not?" was Howard's confident retort. "Other white men have gone after big game with a bow and arrow. Why shouldn't I be as good a man as they?"

"Yeah," said King with rasping cynicism. "But you take it from me—and I'm telling you what I know—those white men have made good and certain that there's a sure shot with a heavy rifle standing just outside of the moving picture."

"Well—" Howard laughed, full of bravado in his health and returning strength—"these natives don't have any guns and moving pictures handy, and if you'll come out with me tomorrow I'll show you that a white man doesn't run any danger greater than a native does."

King weighed the proposition.

"I'll come with you," he agreed finally. "And I'll watch. I won't hunt with you, 'cause I never take chances just for the fun of taking them. I gave that up ten years ago when the hurts didn't stack up with the profits. And I'll carry a gun, because I go no place in the interior of Africa without a gun."

Howard laughed at him, not ill naturedly but with a certain condescension. He had thought that King, the Kingi *bwana* of whom he had heard so many tales before he ever came into this hinterland, would be a daredevil who would try anything once.

But King only smiled, wholly impervious to banter. He knew what he knew and he did what he did for his own coldly calculated reasons, and ridicule was not going to tease him into taking a dare.

"I'll come with you and I'll carry a rifle and I'll stay near an easy tree to climb," he promised.

"Oh, come now," Howard jeered him. "There's a million times more kick to it with the primitive weapons. It's man with his nerve and skill against brute; and man's intelligence in addition gives him the advantage."

"Yeah, I've heard all that before." King nodded quietly. "In the moving picture titles— But I've been the man with the gun three paces to the right of the camera."

"Pshaw," said Howard. "The natives go out on their nerve and their skill; and John here will tell you that dozens of scientific tests have proven that physically, in muscular strength and agility and in reaction to brain impulses, a white man is always superior to—"

"Gosh," the doctor interrupted. "If we get on to that argument we shall be shouting at each other all night. Time for your tonic, Chet."

To King he said:

"A little medicine and a lot of sleep. That has been my invariable prescription for the tired business man; and I stand on my results." And to his patient again, "If you are going careering round again tomorrow with your native hunters you'll need a clear eye and steady nerves."

Howard was reluctantly acquiescent.

"Oh, all right, I suppose you're right, John," he admitted with surprising meekness. "It's results that talk, and I'm certainly feeling fitter than I've been in years. I'll come round for you tomorrow, King, and you'll see how much finer sport it is without a gun."

King went back to his camp on the farther side of the water hole and stalked with long strides in front of the fire. Up and down, down and up, thumbs hooked into his belt, pipe stuck at a stiff angle into his tight mouth, eyes glinting thinly under brows that met in a perpendicular furrow. Plenty of sleep was a good prescription when it could be taken conveniently. On the other hand, it was useful to be able to do without any of it sometimes.

King did not know why he was bothered. There was nothing wrong with that other camp. There were two white men in the best of health and on the best of terms with each other—on the part of the one man the regard for the other was almost idolatrous. They were also on friendly terms with the natives, as was

evidenced by the hunting parties.

This was no demoralized camp, oppressed by a sinister atmosphere of magic mumbo-jumbo, taboo to the natives, white men wasting away from some mysterious poison, as King had pictured to himself.

And still something was not right. As yet it was no more than a feeling to King. Laboriously he went over every detail, trying to find something, some irregular point in the seemingly harmonious whole to which he could attach the vague disquiet that he sensed and the native policemen's report of a magic killing in the offing.

On the face of it everything was normal. And was quite contrary to all the established villainies. Villains lured their victims away into desolate places in order to kill them. Here the doctor was well and had nursed his patient back to vigorous health. Everybody was happy and nobody was sick.

The camp was in every way normal. A wealthy sportsman, happily rich enough to afford his private medical adviser, had come to Africa for a much needed holiday to recuperate shattered nerves and to regain his health; and under the close control of that quite obviously clever physician had done both.

This Howard was a little unusual in his obsession about hunting with primitive weapons. But there was nothing new in that. Other people had done it before with perfect success though perhaps with not quite such a crazy disregard of personal safety.

The only irregular thing about the whole situation—and it bothered King—was a persistent groping in his mind to try to fit the doctor into the rôle of villain. Why, he kept asking himself? Was he being unconsciously prejudiced by the Hottentot's shrewd description of the man as one having eyes like a black mamba? Or by the doctor's not very well concealed desire for isolation with his patient?

King was angry with himself for having suspicions for which he could find no reasonable base. And where anyhow in all this did the story of a witch casting come in at all?"

King shivered in the chilly night air and kicked some more wood on to the fire. The booming roars of the lions that had greeted the nightfall from the far rock *kloof* had long ago ceased, and low throaty moanings and muttered grumblings signified that they were hunting closer to the water hole. Inside the *boma* was a good place to be at such a time. King retreated moodily within and woke a *shenzi* to pull the ready thorn pile into the opening after him.

HOWARD came around with early morning, full of vigor and impatience. The man had talked loosely enough the night before about native methods; but his appearance surprised King.

He was dressed only in a shirt, the shortest of shorts, British fashion, and light sandals. His muscular legs were criss-crossed with countless little scars in all stages of healing, the results of thorns and sharp grasses. King judged that the man must have been quite an unusual athlete before the lure of making dollars caught him. For weapons he carried only two light throwing spears and a longer heavy thrusting weapon. A boy behind him carried a bundle of replacements.

"You certainly go the whole hog," King commented critically.

Howard laughed.

"I've never believed in half measures either in work or in play. Let's get along. It's quite a hike to the nearest village where I have a young fellow who supplies the other hunters."

"Doctor not coming?" asked King, methodically inspecting the chamber and magazine of his rifle and buckling his heavy automatic pistol round his waist, while Kaffa collected the civilized impedimenta of fieldglasses, light lunch and water bottle.

Howard shook his head with a pursing of the lips.

"He's strong on the theory of white man's—trained man's, of course—physical superiority over the black man. But he's like you; he hunts with a gun. All set? Let's go."

They talked a little on the way. Howard was full of a nervous tension. His mind was unwilling to dwell on any subject other than the sport in prospect. King had seen enthusiastic hunters before; but this man was a maniac.

At the village a group of about a dozen natives squatted in the sun in front of their *boma*. A superior sort of man, young for so much authority, counted them off by name and gave them their directions. Howard's boy translated.

King sensed rather than saw that Kaffa was attracting his attention. The Hottentot, casually drawing patterns in the dust with his naked toes and scratching himself with all the restless energy of a monkey, kept his eyes fixed in one direction.

King saw that they were focused on the too young director of proceedings. Casually, therefore, he took critical stock of the man. Upon first survey there was nothing unusual about him beyond the fact that he wore more bits of cloth and dangling ornaments about his person than the underlings. But in the next moment King noted that his amulet pouch, suspended by a thong under his left arm pit like the rest of them, was made of the hairy tuft end of a lion's tail.

All the argument and shouting of Africans left to their own sweet wills hampered affairs. Howard seemed not to mind the wordy delay. He was hunting native fashion; and native fashion the whole business progressed. King in ordinary circumstances would have picked his men, would have given terse orders and would have started. But he kept silent; he was not participating in this hunt; he was only a looker on.

After a wasted hour agreement was finally reached as to where to hunt, and the party straggled off in single file at the long lope of all native hunters the world over. Kaffa, trotting behind his master in the rear, found opportunity to ask at last—

"*Bwana* saw it?"

King strode on without turning his head.

"That was well observed, little man. The fellow is probably a *tagati*."

"Yes, *bwana*. So I, too, thought. A disciple of a lion man."

"Watch him," said King.

He strode on after the line of spearmen, his mind busy again with the baffling problem. The circumstance of a young neophyte of a witch doctor accompanying the party might mean nothing at all. All would-be sorcerers had to show their fitness and courage before they were accepted as ready for the more personal and frightful ordeals which formed a necessary part of their initiation into training. Yet this was the first direct contact with witchcraft in a situation that was singularly devoid of witchcraft.

The party headed for a tangle of thorn bush and high grass through which ran a rain scoured gully. As they approached it the noisy chatter died down and the spearmen spread out in a ragged line along the leeward side of it. Howard was tense with excitement.

"This looks like a good place where we might flush a leopard, don't you think?" he asked eagerly of King.

"For your sake I hope you don't," said King. "There isn't much getaway cover beyond this patch; and a leopard, rather than break into the open, is likely to turn and fight through."

Howard only laughed gleefully at the suggestion. It was easy to see how the thrill of personal encounter gripped him. The man was of just that type; big, strong, aggressive. Whether in business in the fight for dollars or in sport, it was the joy of pitting his wits and his brawn against the other side that keyed up every nerve. That was why he had won so well and why the winning had so taxed his nerve forces.

Just now he stood breathing fast, eyes wide and shining, his lips, as he let out a short laugh every now and then, curling up almost in a snarl. So must primitive man have looked when he went out with his primitive weapons to battle or to the chase. So looked the black native hunters waiting for the signal to advance against whatever that brush patch might hide.

The young *tagati* man whistled piercingly through his fingers. Immediately every native let himself go. Howls, yells, whistles broke out; spears brandished; the line crashed into the thicket. Howard yelled and leaped forward with them.

The strategy was the usual native one of driving whatever game there might be into the steep sided dry water course and then to bottling up the ends and closing in on whatever might not have climbed out at the other side.

King moved along the thicket edge and found for himself a tall anthill from which he could look down into quite a stretch of the *donga*. He had seen this kind of thing often before; but never a white man in it.

The first signs of startled wild things were, of course, birds. With squawks and screeches they flew high to safety. A flock of guinea fowl raced to the *donga* edge and sailed superbly across. Came a pause before the slower land creatures arrived. Then a spotted serval cat soundlessly appeared, slunk down and—wise beyond most beasts—climbed daintily up the farther bank and melted away.

A pair of great wolfish looking silver-backed jackals stood looking back with red tongues lolling and then they too dipped down. Other beasts all along the line, with the always astounding silence of wild things, found their way down the *donga* sides. Quick forms showed along the gully bed. The bottom grasses waved; bushes rustled; a great scuffling and scurrying was apparent.

Wisely the shouting natives did not come too close. Their yells died down. They were separating into two bands to climb down the ends of the *donga* and converge to the final rush.

Black panting forms appeared at King's end, eyeballs staring, necks craned forward, spears gripped in tense fists.

With them was Howard, eyeballs similarly staring, neck craned. He saw King on his anthill, waved a delirious halloo and plunged down a steep incline as recklessly as any of them.

A BEDLAM of howls and yells broke forth and the party charged up the *donga*. King, cautious and poised as he was, felt the glowing primal urge to yell, too, and to race in with that hunt. Instead, he smiled thinly and clicked back the safety catch of his rifle. There was no telling what thing might be down there.

With a whoop a wild black form hurled a throwing spear into a bush that moved. Something screamed. Half a dozen spears followed it. Husky throats howled success and charged on.

The white form of Howard was conspicuous. Charging with the rest, he whooped with them, hurled spears with them, yelled with them at spurting blood.

The howls of the other party became apparent at the other end of the gully. A tremendous agitation of the shrubbery between. King sat with ready rifle. Not that he expected any devastating leopard form any longer—a leopard would have showed itself before now. But there was no telling what danger might still be there.

And danger there was. With an angry squeal a gaunt wild pig dashed from cover and immediately shrieked out its life in piercing agony. Other shrieks indicated a whole herd. The hunters outshrieked them. Here was meat indeed.

Furious grunts came as a great slate-colored boar crashed out directly in front of Howard. King could see its wicked teeth champ as it tossed foam

bubbles aside. Howard whooped and flung a light spear. It struck. The boar squealed its rage and ducked back into cover. In another instant it squealed again and with two spears sticking in its sides charged furiously out, directly at Howard.

It must have weighed all of a hundred and fifty pounds, and one slash of its tusks could have ripped a man wide open from knee to sternum. To shoot into that mass was impossible. King held his breath; for tragedy hung on a hair balance.

But superbly Howard dropped his throwing spears, gripped his heavy lance in both hands and bent to meet the shock. The charging brute impaled itself, reared high with the spear waving in the air, and fell over. A dozen other blades flashed into it.

Howard leaped high and screamed his kill. Black forms leaped and screamed around him. Swiftly converging forms and darting spears marked the end of the drive. Uncouth leapings, howlings, waving of weapons announced triumph.

But there was still ceremonial to be performed. Rites that surround every phase of life for the African to propitiate or to avert the ghosts of slain things that haunt his imagination.

Sharp blades quickly gashed throats to let the still warm blood run. Black men bathed their arms, their thighs and their foreheads in the thick welling liquid. White man Howard bathed and shrieked with them.

King looked down on it all, very still, very serious, with the beginning of understanding in his eyes.

"Good Lord, just like one of them," he muttered.

Kaffa, still too, like a watching creature of the wild and quite as frightened, understood.

"No, *bwana,*" he whispered. "Not just like one of them. He *is* one of them."

King let minutes pass while he watched the orgy. Then explosively—

"And that, by God is the witchcraft of this thing."

"Yes, *bwana,*" said Kaffa with conviction. "He is a lion man."

"Who?" said King sharply.

"The witch doctor of this place, *bwana.* A man who can turn himself into a lion can surely turn a white man into a Dodinga savage."

"Rubbish!" said King. But he could perceive a dim connection to the truth in the Hottentot's ingrained conviction. He continued to sit on the anthill, hugging his knees and gazing down at the screaming mêlée below, seeing nothing of it all.

Howard climbed out of the *donga,* his excitement all gone. He was pale; he looked quite used up. Rather shamefacedly he was wiping the ritual blood from his forehead and arms with handfuls of grass. His manner was that of a man, come back to his senses after a wild outburst of emotion, who knew that he had been making rather a spectacle of himself. He was almost apologetic.

"There's a tremendous kick in that sort of thing for me," he explained. "I used to be a gun crank; but gunning took up so much of my time that I was neglecting business, and I had to cut it out altogether."

King nodded without speaking. Howard forced the subject.

"But gunning went stale on me. There's no sport in slaughtering animals with a gun. But there's thrill in a bow and arrow; and a spear is even better. To tell you the truth, I don't understand how a man with the experience of Kingi *bwana* still sticks to the rifle."

King's answer was laconic.

"Shoot only for meat myself," was all that he said.

He could understand easily how any man might grow weary of precision killing with a modern rifle—he knew more than one big game man who had come back as a camera hunter pure and simple. He could understand—he thought—how a man in whom the hunter in-

stinct was strong might be bold enough to revert to primitive weapons, though still retaining the insurance of a gun in case of necessity; he knew such men too. He could understand—almost—how a man of nervous temperament might be so obsessed by the need of a new thrill that he might forego the insurance of a gun. But none of that explained at all satisfactorily how a man might go stark screaming primitive along with his weapons.

He left Howard with his chattering blacks, and struck off on a detour to climb a hill for the ever enthralling purpose of looking over new country and filing away in his photographic mind geographical details for possible future use.

But he filed away little. He was absorbed in other thoughts. So absorbed that when, nearing camp, a reed buck flashed up and skimmed over the grass, he snapped up his rifle and scored a clean miss. A second shot was necessary to bring down the meat that he knew his two *shenzies* expected.

"It is an omen," said Kaffa lugubriously.

"Rubbish!" snorted King.

But the Hottentot knew better.

"Nay, *bwana,* it is truth that the happening of any very unusual thing is never by accident but it is a sending from the ghost world to warn of a worse happening to come."

And surely enough, come it did.

The lions were bad that night. In country where game is plentiful for the reason that it is far from the usual route of white men's safaris, lions, too, are plentiful for both of those reasons. And, quite logically, are also correspondingly bold.

MANY a tenderfoot has quaked the night through in his blankets, feeling quite sure, even in his inexperience, than any lion could easily spring over the hastily constructed six or eight foot thorn fence of a camp *boma.* He has argued the case on the logical basis that if a cat can jump four feet with hardly an effort, a lion surely ought to be able to do six. And he has bolstered his argument by pointing out the discrepancy between the miserable camp protection and the strong, tall, regular stockades of thorn bushes round every established native village.

And of course he has been right. A lion can hop over a camp fence, seize a donkey, or a pig, or a man, and spring back into the night as easily as a cat can do the same thing with its kitten. And lions have done it often enough.

It is only the innate suspicion and caution of the cat tribe that restrains a lion—or any other animal—from forcing a barrier, however flimsy. Animal instincts, or hereditary memories, or whatever the naturalists like to call it. It may be true that a human child does not dread the fire until it has once been burnt. But it is none the less true that the season's new grouse or rabbit or deer whose progenitors have been shot over are much wilder than the same animals in virgin country.

So also lions who have had experience —or perhaps whose parents have had experience—that out of such low thorn barriers surrounding the man smell there are likely to come sharp reports, long flashes of light, and stinging lead, are vastly more cautious than others in faraway districts that have had no such experience.

In this camp it was necessary to keep a good fire burning within the *boma* and to see to it that the man on watch kept moving about. It is when all has been still and dark for a long period that a lion, watching with that feline patience, will make up its mind that it is safe to make its devastating dash.

As it was, King was kept awake by the ominous circling moanings and snuffings that came too close and he was forced to shoot out into the night at vaguely moving shadows more than once. At the third shot a furious snarling evidenced that something had been

scratched, if not worse. And after that there was peace.

Only Kaffa's voice, muffled out of his blanket, proclaimed his conviction—

"Tomorrow if we find that wizard, the lion man, it will be seen that he has received a wound."

"Fool," said King, "so do your brother apes talk in the trees."

But he remembered circumstantial stories, not out of ancient folk lore in Europe; but stories of Africa today that made the same claim.

But the little matter of prowling lions at night was not the presaged ill luck of which the Hottentot had been so sure. It was concerned only indirectly with a much worse happening.

The misfortune came to light in the morning when Kaffa, according to his master's invariable rule, was cleaning the gun used overnight and was preparing to bring it for inspection along with the shells for the new load.

Kaffa scuffed in sudden alarm through the packs. He threw things in every direction, picked them up again and looked under them, opened each impossibly small package and container, before he came to his master in the greatest agitation.

"*Bwana*, the evil has befallen. The cartridges are gone."

"Hunh?" King whirled, then stood and screwed his eyes in swift thought.

"While we were out yesterday—this is serious—that boy Umbobo from the other camp."

"Nay, *bwana*. Umbobo is honest. From me he will not steal. Besides, those *shenzies* were left on guard. It is the witchcraft of this place. It was foretold; and the lion man sent his people to cause *bwana* to shoot away all the cartridges in his gun."

"Fool," grunted King. "Those *shenzies* slept like oxen; or they went visiting in the village the moment our backs were turned; or they squatted by the hour at the *donga's* edge and made monkey talk. They did everything but stay on guard; and from them we shall never extract the truth."

"Nay, *bwana*, those *shenzies* have been trained by Barounggo; they would never dare to disobey. And as for truth, it is a wisdom of my country that a hot spear blade under the armpit is a great magic for bringing out the truth."

King gave vent to a bitter little laugh.

"Kaffa, little ape, I have often said that civilized man in a savage country suffers many disadvantages on account of his inhibitions—which phenomenon you will not understand. For the present say no word to any man about this loss. But go to the other camp and talk with a snake's tongue to this Umbobo. Perhaps your wisdom will discover something. This is a matter that requires thought before action."

To be without ammunition in the middle of Africa was serious enough; King knew, of course, exactly what guns the other safari carried. He had known within half an hour of their first meeting. They were not of his caliber. He knew that Yakoub would be coming along within the next day or so with some kind of antiquated gun. He still had his heavy automatic pistol with a belt containing a string of cartridges.

So it was not a matter of starvation in the midst of plenty. The serious aspect of the thing was that this queer plot, whatever it was, that haunted this place had now included him, the interloper, in its field. And it was evidence of what King had almost begun to doubt—that there was a deliberate something going on inimical to white men. He knew enough of Africa not to have to be reminded of the deputy commissioner's warning of how these dark underground unrests could flare into sudden disaster.

Whatever was sinister in Africa, wizardry of course was at the back of it. King's lips set very hard and his jaw muscles swelled. He would have to go and see this witch doctor and would have to show him that his tricks could rebound upon himself. A difficult enough undertaking; for a witch doctor, like a high priest among his own people,

could not be attacked without the frenzied hordes of his people coming to his aid.

Still King had made African wizardries his special interest and he hoped that he knew of methods of approach less drastic than strong arm. He would have gone to see this lion man long ago, but that the sorcerer exercised his subtle sway from his residence in a *juju* grove a full day's journey distant; and King was waiting for Yakoub to arrive and keep his clever old eyes on things before he should absent himself.

KING went round the water hole to the other camp—just to snoop around, as he expressed it to himself; to help his Hottentot ferret out whatever might be discovered. Not for a moment would he permit himself to harbor his insistent suspicion that possibly that very clever doctor who desired his absence might have something to do with his mysterious loss.

The doctor was as cordial as ever. If he had any guilty knowledge, his boldly open eyes and ready smile concealed it wonderfully well. The other man, Howard, was out.

"Gone off somewhere or other," the doctor said carelessly. "Making a day of it. He has got a new excitement quite a long way from here. Some young buck who is making his manhood ceremony is going to pull off some new crazy method of hunting and Chet has gone to see the stunt."

More seriously he went on:

"You know I'm getting to be a bit worried about that chap. He's so reckless about his sport—always was; he used to play polo like a wild man and he hurt so many ponies and riders that at last his club wouldn't play him any more. Then he fell for this new bow and arrow stuff; until business caught him up; and he went for that with bull enthusiasm, till the mental strain just about got him. Now he is back to play with the same intensity. What I'm afraid of is that he'll be getting himself all clawed up some day, and I'll have to patch him up."

King was very subtle.

"You've known him quite long, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. We were in college together."

"Then you might almost have guessed he'd go off like this," said King accusingly.

The doctor laughed.

"Heavens, how should I have guessed? I never saw so much of him. I was hardly in his class. He always had a fair amount of money and he could play; while I had to study like a dog and to work besides to pay my way. Then I traveled around a good deal, working for an Austrian scientist, a Dr. Holzmann, for very little more than experience. And I had a job with the South African Free State government. In the meanwhile he went into business and in a few years made a spectacular fortune. I saw very little of him till he called me in as his medical adviser; and he was not playing then. I've pieced all his furious history out since we came away."

"Hmh," was all King's ungracious comment to so much personal information. "Was that Dr. Franz Holzmann? A white hunter whom I know took him out some years ago from Dar-es-Salaan when all that country was German East Africa."

The doctor shot a quick glance at King who was absorbed in an extraordinary business of blowing smoke rings through one another.

"Why, er—yes, I suppose that must have been the same man," said the doctor shortly.

King grunted again, even more shortly, and took his leave. He had found out nothing at all about his stolen ammunition; but in its place he had found—he thought—one tiny hook upon which to fasten his vague misgivings.

On the following morning Yakoub ben Abrahm came in with the rest of the

combined safari. King, as he made him comfortable, and while Kaffa scurried with hot water in a five-gallon kerosene can for the refreshing bath after travel, watched the orderliness of things with critical amusement.

The big Masai strutted officiously and growled orders. The trader's tent and the cook tent sprang up smartly, with straight walls and taut ropes. Baggage was stowed neatly under the fly eaves. *Shenzies* went to gather more thorn bush to enlarge the *boma*. These men had been very properly drilled.

"That was a work well done, Barounggo," King commended.

The Masai lifted his spear in salute and grinned proudly.

"Yes, there is a certain ease, almost a symphony, in travel," said Yakoub, "when that great fellow of yours conducts the music with his spear."

King was glad to have the Jew with him. He wanted to discuss many obscure things, to throw the light of the shrewd old trader's observation upon the darkness in his own mind.

Carefully and methodically he related all the happenings of the last few days, all his vague misgivings and almost groundless suspicions, and then propounded the question that baffled him.

"But why? I ask myself. What would be the motive? I mean, if this doctor has brought him here for any purpose—to get money out of him, let us say, as the natural suspicion—why has he brought him at all? What can he do here that he couldn't do at home? The man has grown well and strong here."

The Jew screwed his face in a grimace while he reviewed out of his own experience all the amazingly involved and twisted things that men would do for money. From time to time he nodded slowly as possibilities opened themselves up, and then clawed sensitive fingers through his beard as difficulties obstructed his theories. At last he chuckled over a quick pointed finger at King as his reasoning ran in an unbroken chain.

"My friend, you are very clever; you do many things that few men can do; but in matters of money you are a small child. Listen to me, Yakoub ben Abrahm, and I will teach you some of the possibilities about money.

"Let us consider a great deal of money, such as would make a long journey worthwhile. Consider a rich man, sick of a nervous breakdown, a little bit off from his mental control. What might such a man do?"

"I've considered all that," said King. "Such a man, grateful, as this man is grateful; a little off balance, as this man was off balance, might be persuaded to pay his doctor a quite unreasonable fee—or to marry his nurse; or to donate a fortune to the church. He might do anything. But why would he have to come here to do it?"

YAKOUB smiled like a benevolent devil who knew the very depths of human avarice.

"I have said much money. Let us consider a million dollars. Do you think a man sick and off balance might be persuaded to write a check for a million dollars?"

"He might if he were crazy. But even so, he would have signed it. It would be cashed. There is still no need for bringing him here."

"Ah." The Jew leered a worldly cynicism. "But, my very simple friend, there are always many difficulties in the way of collecting a million dollars—or half a million, or a quarter million. Consider. Our rich man recovers his senses. He feels that the fee that he has signed away has been exorbitant. If he does not feel so of his own accord, there are always many people to persuade him so. Lawyers. All rich men have lawyers, cold blooded and perfectly balanced, who look after their financial affairs—who would quickly tell him that he has been fooled; who would arouse his anger by showing him that his ill balanced condition has been taken advantage of; who would persuade him to let them

take steps—injunctions upon banks and all the legal tricks that earn fees for lawyers—to recover the greater part of that exorbitant fee. You think that is possible, no?"

King nodded.

"The man is of nervous temperament, a strong man, proud. True, he might be so persuaded."

"Good. Our doctor, too, fears this possibility. He persuades his mind sick patient to come away for his health. Perhaps on the voyage, working upon him alone, he persuades him to write a check for much money. Perhaps the rich man then—dies in Africa—"

Quickly outflung hands stopped King's response to the thought. With saturnine logic the Jew continued his deadly argument.

"The man dies, not under any suspicious circumstances, lost in the wilderness alone with his physician. But before witnesses who have seen him regain his health, under the eyes of British native police, as a result of his own very foolish method of going hunting."

He ceased and peered at King with questioning eyes through his wisps of straggling hair.

"By the Lord, I believe you're right, Yakoub." King expelled a long held breath. "You're the very devil, old friend. Only a devil could think of such things."

Yakoub cackled a dry laugh and laid down an axiom.

"For much money, my friend, many men have become devils. And it is for you—" the swift finger pointed compellingly at King. "You have dealings with the dark devils of Africa. It is for you to find out by what witchery a man may be persuaded to go looking for danger in his hunting."

King remained in frowning silence. Carefully he reviewed the facts as he knew them and the shrewd interpretation that the trader put upon them. Then very softly he said:

"It fits. It all fits. I don't see a hole in it anywhere. And as for the man's crazy hunting, being the man he is, I don't think it would need any very great witchery to swing his sporting instincts that way—and our clever doctor man would know that too. But we must have proof. I must go and see this witch doctor."

"Tell me something of this witchcraft," said Yakoub. "What sort of wizard is this lion man?"

King shrugged his shoulders doubtfully.

"I don't know whether that counts so much; but they are like the leopard cult of the West Coast. A lion man establishes the idea that he can at will turn himself into a lion. Same as the old werwolf belief. Lycanthropy, the scientific gents call it. Mixed in with the surrounding mess of hokum is the strong fact that these wizards can persuade their followers that they can actually turn them temporarily into lions or leopards or wolves or whatever it is. The method is probably hypnotism, suggestion, hystero-epilepsy — call it what you will. But it is proven fact that people of a certain nervous temperament can be made to believe that under certain conditions they become the animals of their cult; and they go out and behave like those animals. You've probably seen hyena men in Abyssinia slinking around after dark, fighting with the dogs for dead things."

The Jew shuddered uncomfortably.

"Yes, I have seen. But those men are crazy, afflicted with some horrible madness of this dark land."

"Not a bit of it. They're not crazy. Their original hereditary conviction of its possibility and the enormously suggestive ritual that they go through beforehand makes them believe that for the time being they actually are animals."

The Jew remained dubious.

"You think such unholy things are possible?"

King was positive.

"I know it's possible. Science knows

it's possible. It's just a little extension of the principle that if you get a man in a certain mental condition and tell him a thing often enough he will begin to believe it. There's no more magic in it than in advertising."

The Jew was unconvinced. Coldly practical, a man of material business, of purchases and sales and profits and losses, so new an idea of the vagaries of the human mind required time to assimilate.

"So I suppose, my obstinate Kingi, you are going to thrust your head into this lion man's jaws in order to do what you may for your countryman who does not want your help?"

"I'm beginning to wonder whether the lion man is much more than a hired hand in this thing," said King. "But I'm going to see him. Evidence is what we need. Something more than guesswork. I'll start right away. His place is a day's march away. I'll take Kaffa and Barounggo. We'll *boma* some place overnight and I'll surprise him with an early call."

The Jew shook his head.

"You do not surprise those devil dealers. They know."

Long after King left, he remained standing, a lugubrious figure framed in the tent flap, shaking his head over the profitless effort of such folly.

THE JUJU grove of the witch doctor stood deserted and silent. The usual litter and claptrap of African sorcery lined the approach. Bones of various sorts—the leavings of lions' kills—impaled upon stakes. Wisps of colored cloths wound, Maypole fashion, round denuded tree boles. Woven grass curtains festooned across paths to obstruct evil spirits. The witch doctor's rather pretentious hut stood in the center, surrounded by a stockade of poles capped with lions' skulls.

King carefully refrained from the customary white man's brazen trampling over all tabus, arousing thereby antagonism. He knew that a witch doctor, whether rightly or wrongly, had established around himself a certain cloak of mystery and that human vanity was a force with which to reckon.

So he sat down and lighted a pipe while he sent Kaffa to follow a maze of carefully marked paths and to call from without the stockade what he knew the wizard knew very well—that a stranger sought interview.

His reward was, if nothing else, a saving of much time. A young *tagati* neophyte quickly came down the wooded knoll and led King along other paths, carefully holding aside grass curtains so that they might not be touched by the uninitiate. King was ushered within the skull crowned stockade into a roomy circular hut and found himself alone in a dim, smoke filled room with a figure entirely shrouded in a tanned lion skin.

"I can tell you nothing about that white man who is bewitched," came an ungracious voice from beneath the skin.

King was not surprised that the man was already familiar with his object; the thing was pretty obvious. But it was of interest that the man admitted the other to be under a spell. King was wise in the ways of witch doctors; he knew their dignities and their conventions.

"I bring a gift," he said. "A tribute to knowledge that I desire to consult and perhaps to buy a release from a spell."

"I can give you no release," said the voice. But a dark hand emerged from under the skin to receive whatever it might be.

King placed into the open palm a small jar of luminous paint such as is sold to sportsmen for spotting their rifle sights for night shooting. Beneath the shuffling of the lion skin he could hear the soft unscrewing of the cap; some more shuffling and a succession of grunts. This thing was a great and most useful magic to any wizard; and it betokened, moreover, that the giver

knew that a certain amount of hokum was legitimate to all magic.

The lion skin was thrown aside and the man showed himself; a native in sturdy middle age with a strong face and fierce eyes, which were, however, just now friendly. King was glad to think that diplomacy had perhaps removed the need of hostile methods against that determined looking face.

"*Jambo sana,*" said the wizard. "This is indeed a gift of one who has understanding. I have heard that there is such a white man. If you are that man, show me the thing that speaks for you."

King handed the man his pipe with its intricately carved bowl that had been done under the direction of the old wizard of Elgon. The man bent with it over the tiny fire that was cooking whatever it was that stank. He peered at the pattern, felt the convolutions of the carving. He looked up over it and asked an unexpected question.

"Do you know what things this says, white man?"

It was noticeable that he did not address King as *bwana*—master. Had King exacted that established tribute of respect, that would have meant the end of all negotiations.

"I know some of the things," said King. "Some, no white man may know."

"Some, I do not know," said the wizard. "For he is of another brotherhood. But the things are good. I will therefore speak truth, as to one who understands.

"I tell you, therefore, in truth, white man, that I have sent no witch sending upon that other white man. It is ill to deal with the affairs of white men."

"Yes, it is ill," said King. "For the commissioner *bwana* of all this district is a man who begins to have understanding too. Yet the word came that there was a witch casting."

The wizard grunted angrily.

"Those two black men who take the white *serkale's* money to interfere with other black men are fools. By their foolishness and because I will not pay tribute to them, they would bring the *serkale's* trouble upon all my people. I have already seen to it that they shall lose, each man, a cow, taken by lions. It is just; for I do not deal with the affairs of white men."

"Yet that white man does things as the black men do them," said King.

The wizard came closer, confidentially.

"Am I the only one," he asked in a tone full of meaning, "who can do a magic? Are there no small magics among the white men? Look, you who have understanding, I can look into a man's eyes and tell him, 'Lo, upon the rising of the next moon over the tree tops you will be a lion', and forthwith he will go forth and slay like a lion. That is no very hard magic. It is but making a pattern in the soft thing that is a man's mind. Among my young men are already three who can do it. Is there no white man who knows how to plant the seed of a thought in a man's mind and then, by a careful watering with words, make that seed grow? That is a little thing that is not even magic."

King nodded. He felt that this wizard was being candid with him.

"Yes, I was beginning to think so. I wanted to be sure that he had not bought a witch casting from you."

"I deal with no white man," complained the wizard. "There is only trouble in it. How should I know why that other white man has told the foolish one that he is a great hunter and that he can do all things as the black men do them? What affair is it of mine that he has spoken that seed into his mind and has made it grow? What should I care why that other white man is the foolish one's enemy and wishes to destroy him? What business is it of mine that the foolish one is even now in the plain behind this hill looking to do a lion killing with shield and spear? I have no dealings with the affairs of white men."

"Hunh?" King jumped up and caught the other's arm in a sudden grip. "What talk is this?"

"It is a true talk," said the wizard doggedly. "What has it to do with me? This place is the home of many lions."

"What wizardry do you talk here?" snapped King. "Out with the truth."

"There is no wizardry, white man. Yesterday one of my young men who would be a *tagati* made his manhood test with shield and spear; and the foolish white man came all the day's journey to see that thing done. Today that foolish white man goes forth with shield and spear to show that he can kill as a black man kills, and my young men go to watch that sport. What has it to do with me who kills or who is killed? I have no dealings with the affairs of white men."

"Good Lord! *Now,* you say? Where? Exactly where?"

"How do I know exactly where he may find his lion? There are many lions in the plain. But wait and I will cast the stones for you; and if the conditions are favorable for a seeing I may see what will be. Though for white men—"

But King was already gone. Shouting to Barounggo and Kaffa, he raced over the brow of the *juju* hill and anxiously swept his field glasses over the plain beyond.

IT WAS a typical African plain, rolling ground with low hills covered with long grass and patches of bush and interspersed with clumps of tall umbrella spreading acacias. The hunt—or the tragedy—might be going on anywhere, under one's nose almost, screened by the first low hump of ground. The only hope was to go, to climb each hill, to survey as much as might be and then to race to the next hill. And above all to pray for time. And time, if lions were as plentiful as the wizard implied, was the least likely kind of luck to expect.

King cursed himself for an easily hoodwinked fool that he had no suspicion of the suave doctor's careless remark about a new excitement that Howard had gone a long way off to witness. What a crafty planting of an alibi that had been. In his heat he promised himself some heavy conversation with that doctor man whose eyes were like a black mamba's.

Together the three men trotted. King's impulse was to race; but hard common sense told him that grass covered plain and hills to be climbed called, not for any excited sprinting, but for dogged plodding. The first low hill was a blank. Only peacefully waving grass and brush patches met the eye. A small herd of Grant's gazelles and another of hartebeeste grazed quietly. Their manner was unhurried, confident. No lion scent there.

The three toiled on. More than a mile to cover to the next hill. Slow going. That hill too disclosed no man figures within its horizon. Barounggo pointed silently with his spear at a farther knoll. There, blending marvelously into the sun flecked background, beautifully posed in lazy grace, a magnificent male lion lolled, licking a paw like a great cat. That too was quiet and at ease. No hunting here, nor any man smell downwind.

So downwind King struck. The next knoll, too, was a blank. Only peaceful beasts at their ease. But Kaffa pointed above the flat horizon of acacia tops. King nodded critically.

"They're watching something. But what? Those birds are circling easily and without excitement. Whatever is going on isn't violent—as yet."

A good mile again to that hilltop. Nobody who has not tried to run, urged by anxiety and the need for haste, across bunch grass the roots of which stand up in stiff hillocks with rain scoured trenches between, can understand what a breath taking grind that is. But the little hill was reached, and beyond it the panorama of yellow grass and brown thorn patch and green mimosa scrub stretched pleasingly.

King yelled. Barounggo roared. Kaffa whistled through his teeth. Together the three raised all the uproar that their

lungs permitted to attract attention. But only the circling birds took any notice. They shrieked in answer and flapped higher. The far silhouettes of men, black against the sunlit grass, paid no attention. Their full senses were taken up with serious business.

It was a spread out line of men, some twenty of them, like skirmishers, all armed with spears and big oval shields of ox hide. They faced the hillock. The eye caught their contrasting black against the grass at once. Next it flashed to another figure, not so differentiated, facing the black line, some seventy yards away. This figure's brown shirt and khaki helmet cover merged better with the grass; but it was easy to see that that one, too, carried spear and shield and that he was advancing slowly, tense, with weapons poised.

Between the solitary figure and the farther line was something upon which the attention of both was concentrated. The three men on the hill knew instantly, from the strained position of the men, what the something was. But it was only when it moved that their eyes could pick it out from the perfect blend of its surroundings.

It was the black tuft of tail that first attracted attention. In quick sweeping strokes, with short intervals between, it lashed over the grass tops. Then the rest of it could be seen. Its mane was flared out and its head held low as it crouched with wide spread front paws.

It was easy to see that the beast was angry, vicious from having been hunted by men, harried into its present position. It gave out two coughing grunts and plunged forward in a short rush and then crouched again and lashed the grass.

The white man, with superb madness, poised with long spear lifted as the beast charged; and then, as it crouched, he advanced slowly again.

King yelled and raced down the slope as fast as his winded condition would let him, bitterly cursing the fact that his rifle had been left in camp because there were no cartridges for it. At that elevation and distance, he might have overshot the man and possibly have hit the lion.

His pistol, as yet, was useless.

The lion made another short rush and crouched as before. King's heart came up into his mouth and he yelled again and raced on.

Howard, if he heard him at all, paid no attention. He dared not permit himself to divert the littlest fraction of his concentration from the angry beast in front of him. Inch by inch, on soft shuffling toes that felt for the ground, he advanced, his great shield held with its rim just below eye level and his right hand grasping his long spear with point low.

The technique of this thing was to judge time and distance to a hair and, as the lion rushed in on its final charge, to lunge, full armed, knuckles up, and to take the beast in the chest, meeting weight with weight so as to plunge the blade deep into the vitals. The proper stroke at chest center would reach the heart.

Howard plainly knew how the thing ought to be done. He had seen a young *tagati* perform the supremely dangerous stunt, and without doubt he had asked questions and taken instruction. His pose, as he faced the most perfectly equipped killer of all the great carnivora, was excellent.

Unhappily for himself, in this hunting mania that obsessed him, he was overlooking—or perhaps his attention had been carefully diverted from—a small but very vital factor. However true might be the doctor's thesis—however well bolstered by scientific tests in American universities—that a white man's muscle quality was better than a black man's, that his reflex responses were faster, the inconspicuous but enormous fact that Howard was overlooking was that the plain matter of skill in spear handling comes with the years of constant practise that a black man gives it.

LONG before King could arrive on the scene, the distance between lion and man reached its minimum limit. The lion coughed, a furious *hough-hough,* and charged in. Howard lunged, gashed only its shoulder and the next instant disappeared under swift batting paws and a roaring, tearing five hundred pounds of beast.

The skilled native technique in this position—provided that the hunter still survived—was not so desperate as it might seem. A man who retained his senses could cover with the big shield, head under and legs drawn up, like a tortoise, clinging desperately to the hand grip to avoid being turned over; in the meanwhile looking for an opportunity to use a short heavy stabbing spear that had been held within the shield in the left hand.

Howard was down and lay inert, whether by luck or by design, covered for the most part by his shield. The lion stood over him and tore indiscriminately at whatever it reached.

King wrenched his pistol from its holster and raced forward. Barounggo's voice growled at his side:

"Let be, *bwana,* let be. This is my work that is known to me."

His great form outstripped King's. The lion, as the huge black man bounded toward it, held down the shield with one wide spread paw and lifted its head to roar defiance and warning. The big Masai, charging in with great spear balanced for stabbing as though to hurl himself bodily upon the beast, swerved suddenly so as to get behind its tail. The lion scuffled round in two short plunges and reared up on its hind legs, front paws wide apart, to meet this new menace.

Then the Masai struck. Not a lunge in this position, but a full arm downward stab—in the center of the chest, just where the mane began to give way to the lighter colored, short, abdominal hair. The long three-foot blade slid in as though through soft butter. Right up to the close binding of brass wire that held it to its shaft.

The lion gave an immense twisting bound high in the air, away from the thing that stung it so excruciatingly. Landing erect on all four feet, it still tried with splendid courage to charge at the man. But its front paws turned under it. It slid over them. Its white tuft of chin plowed a furrow in the dust while the yellow eyes still glared defiance. Then it rolled on its side and stretched in a series of quivering jerks.

Other men came running. There was shouting and confusion and crowding. The Dodinga men looked at the great Masai spear, tugged tentatively at it, clicked guttural approbation at the power of the stroke. Barounggo, helping King to pick Howard up, affected a vast unconcern. Over his shoulder he admitted carelessly:

"A fair stroke. A not bad stroke. Hey, fellow, be careful there how you draw that blade. Twist it not, or I twist your neck."

"It was a man's deed, cleanly done," said King shortly. "There will be suitable recognition to your father. We must get this man swiftly to the witch doctor's house. There will be water."

Howard lay quite unconscious. Claw tip punctures in a row behind the ear showed where the lion had slapped him with a force almost sufficient to break his neck. The shield rim had probably broken the force of that blow. His left shoulder and upper arm were slashed to the bone in three separate wide gashes. His right leg below the knee, where it had protruded from beneath the shield, was scored in ribbons by the rasping hind claws of the beast. Nothing seemed to be broken.

The wizard came out of his hut as the mob of jabbering men approached.

"So the foolish one has not been destroyed this time," was his only comment. "Why do you bring him here, white man? I have no dealings with the affairs of white men. Yet it was made known to me that you would

come; so I have made preparation."

He gave low, quick orders to some of the young men and sent them scurrying for water and various leaves and a frightfully unsanitary gourd containing some sort of pungent ointment.

"For the sake of the gift, white man, I will make a spell that he may live. Ha, that lion was a young one; or he would have known to slay with the first blow."

King found the wizard to be quite expert in helping him to wash and put a temporary dressing on the wounds.

"He will have fever," said the wizard. "He must be made to drink the thing that I was already preparing for him over my fire when you first came."

King knew that the wizard was talking for the gaping natives to hear; and he knew enough not to show anything but belief. He came to a swift decision. He was going to take a heavy responsibility upon himself. To gamble a man's life against—against he did not know just what. For a wounded man a physician was the first and obvious necessity. Yet that physician had had this same man under his care before when he was sick and weak. The man had certainly recovered his health. But King could not be sure— But what?

If those things, the motives that the Jew suggested, were true; and if the mental sugestion that the witch doctor said was no magic at all was so; if the same physician should nurse the man again, would he recover this time? It was a wonderful chance for a man to die surrounded by white men witnesses of his own foolhardiness. Or, if the man recovered again, would he not perhaps go out and next time do some completely fatal thing?

All these considerations raced through King's mind. On the other hand, his own experience of many years in the bush had perforce taught him quite a deal about field doctoring; his own medical kit was quite complete. The man was strong and in good health. It was even possible that King had more actual experience with lion wounds than the physician. And some of those witch doctors had a very keen knowledge of herbs.

Boldly therefore King decided. He drew the witch doctor aside.

"Do this thing for me, Wise One. Give me a place under a tree where I may make a camp. I will send for my things. Do you let the word go out that this is a tabu; that this happening is among the things unspoken. So that that other white man shall know nothing of what has happened, nor shall he know where my men have gone. Let his servants say that they know nothing; and when he asks among the villages let men say, 'They have gone to such and such another place.'"

The witch doctor looked long at King and then looked away while he cogitated; and finally he said:

"For the sake of the good things that the carved pipe says, and because you come to me as one having the understanding, and because the doings of that other man brought blame upon me, I will do this thing. The word shall go out and there will be a wall of ignorance about that man."

And the thing was perfectly possible. It had happened time and again and would happen often again. For their own mysterious reasons, African communities have decided that some happening or other, or all happenings connected with some custom or other, should be kept secret from white men; and forthwith the thing has been a blank wall of mystery which the white man might know to exist but which he would be utterly unable to penetrate.

Once again the dark and devious things of Africa were pulling for King instead of directly against him.

HE GAVE instructions to his two henchmen to go with all speed and to break camp as quietly as possible; to get away, if they could, without the doctor's knowledge. Or if they could not, to

tell him that their master was moving along on his own business. They would, of course, not be expected to know anything about Howard or his doings.

The wizard sent one of his young *tagati* with them.

"To make the servants of that man eat ignorance," he said.

And King told him—

"For these doings I shall make a writing to the commissioner *bwana* of the *Serkale* that will speak things of you as good as the carving of my pipe."

There was nothing to do for Howard but to fight the fever, which both men knew would come, by keeping compresses on his wounds and his head. King set a man to swinging a pot of water wrapped in a wet cloth hung from the limb of a tree. Howard moaned presently and feebly opened his eyes. Mumbled questions came from his lips. But the witch doctor said:

"See, my spell has snatched him back from out of the very belly of death. Sleep is now good for him. Much sleep. I do now a magic that will make him sleep for the passing of a whole sun."

He laid an inexpressibly grimy hand over the sick man's eyes and went through a performance of mutterings and rolling of his eyes; but all the while he was gently, very smoothly, stroking Howard's face and cheeks and pressing lightly upon his eyeballs with his finger tips. And presently the sick man's mumblings became very tired and then passed away and he slept.

During the course of the following day the safari arrived. Everything had gone splendidly. The doctor had been away —out hunting. The *tagati* man had very properly frightened his safari men. Villages along the way had been warned of the silence. The word would go out to all surrounding villages.

Only the sheer accident of the doctor's wandering a day's journey over the empty plain and happening upon that precise spot would discover the new camp.

Yakoub, in something of consternation, propounded the very question that King had weighed with himself and quickly decided—

"What if the man grows worse, beyond the skill of amateur doctoring?"

"Time enough to send for the professional then," said King sturdily. "He won't go away in any hurry because he must, for the sake of keeping face, make a show of looking for his companion."

And he explained all his reasons for taking the grave responsibility. Better that the sick man recover under other hands.

"And maybe we can argue with him quietly about his crazy hunting while he is weak and receptive and work a little magic ourselves."

The Jew nodded agreement.

"Yes, yes, you understand these things, you who have made a study of deviltries. But that doctor, he should be apprehended and held. He is a master devil."

But King, strangely enough, defended the man.

"We know nothing about the doctor, friend Yakoub; we only suspect. We have built a theory to supply a motive. Till Howard regains his senses we know not a single thing."

Yakoub's eyebrows disappeared into his hair as he peered at King and combed his fingers through his beard. It was not till a long time that the slow nods of understanding came.

"Yes yes, doubtless—it is true, in a court of law he could bring suit. Yes, you have a great foresight, my friend."

Kaffa came into the tent, swollen with importance and mystery and with something under his blanket. King nodded to him to unburden himself.

The Hottentot squatted, still hiding his treasure. With the gloating of a schoolboy detective, he delivered his news.

"*Bwana,* that white man of whom it is ill to speak ill, but who has evil eyes, owns a box, a small box of metal, very strong and with a lock that is fitted by

no key but opens with a magic spell of numbers. The boy Umbobo did not know that spell. But, having spoken of the matter of cartridges, he came to me with much excitement as we were breaking camp there and said, 'Lo, that box has grown heavier, and there are things in it that rattle not like paper.'"

"Ah-h-h," breathed Yakoub. "We are arriving at something more than only suspicion, it seems."

"Therefore, *bwana,*" continued the Hottentot with unholy triumph. "That boy Umbobo stole that box and—behold, it is here."

He swung aside the blanket, with a movement as dramatic as that of a monkey who might have performed the miracle of laying an egg, and disclosed a small steel dispatch box.

"Ah-h-h," breathed Yakoub again.

KING sat on his cot edge, silent, frowning down at the thing that contained who could tell what infamy—or perhaps innocence. Slowly he bent down and lifted it by one brass handle; shook it. Dull, solid thumps came from within.

"Cartridges?" asked Yakoub excitedly. "In packets?"

"Don't know," said King shortly. "Might be. Might be anything else. Papers mostly."

"Ah-h-h," Yakoub's eyes glowed like coals under the dark recesses of his brows. "Papers! Letters perhaps, that throw some light. Evidence. Perhaps—" his voice sank to a dry whisper and he clutched King's sleeve—"perhaps checks—for much money?"

King remained darkly silent.

"You can open it, perhaps, without damaging the lock? Or must you break it?"

For a long time King made no answer. At last, he growled sourly:

"We have no right. We know nothing. We are not policemen."

The Jew gaped at him for a full searching minute this time before he nodded; and then he said:

"Ah, yes, yes. Not till Howard is recovered. He is his employer. He can take the responsibility."

King remained in dark rumination. Then in a voice hard with obstinacy he said:

"It is possible that neither does Howard want to know. He is—was, his friend."

Yakoub peered quickly at King with the wary suspicion of a hawk. To every impulsive suggestion of his the other had raised coldly logical objections; and now he was branching into a guesswork of another's emotions.

King, with very hard set lips and working jaw muscles, went on to dogged decision.

"I think it would be better for everybody if that box were to be utterly lost."

The Jew gasped a grating noise that was no speech and sat back and stared at King in amaze.

"But, my friend, you are insane. That box contains perhaps, evidence of—"

Suddenly he cackled shrill laughter and flung an accusing finger at King's face. Wagging it in high triumph under his nose, he screamed:

"*Aie,* I see it. You can not befool me, my friend Kingi. I know—yes, yes. We would do the same. So exactly would I do for one of my people. You would save the face of your compatriot. His employer knows what he knows. It is his business; and a lost paper more or less will make no difference. And you do not—what is it?—you do not wash your dirt before the strangers in the land. *Aie,* my friend, my very good friend, you do not put your American bluff over me."

King got up in confusion. But his determination was hard set.

"I'm taking responsibility enough," he muttered. "I may as well take another."

To Kaffa:

"Take that box. I do not want to touch it. Take it and let it be completely lost so that no man may find it. It is

an order."

"Yes, *bwana,*" said the Hottentot mournfully. "It is an order."

HOWARD'S recovery was as fast as might be expected. His naturally robust constitution and his great reserve force all tended to a quick recuperation. King sat with him for long hours at a time, "working magic," talking quietly, rationally, about men and things; about hunting, of course; anecdotes, methods, customs, general practises, habits of animals, and so on.

Till Howard smiled wearily one day and said:

"Why not save up some of your stock of stories for a camp-fire some time? I know I've been a goat all right."

And on a day not much later, after a long silence—

"Just how much do you know, Kingi *bwana,* man of circumspection and mystery?"

King looked straight before him.

"I *know* nothing. Only that you were carried off your feet by a swelled head about your hunting prowess."

"Hmh. And how much do you know about my fr—my physician, Dr. Gerardi?"

King still looked doggedly at the horizon.

"I *know* only one thing—that the Dr. Franz Holzmann under whom he studied was a leading European expert on mental phenomena and that he came to Africa and gave some exhibitions of hypnotism in Dar-es-Salaam, and that he wrote, among others, a book called, 'Hallucination: Its Analysis and Induction'."

"Hmh." After another long silence. "Well, I guess I'm well enough. Let's send for Dr. Gerardi and let him know where we are."

So the silence was lifted and a messenger went to lead the doctor to where his patient was convalescing. But the news that came back was that the doctor, instead of packing up safari and coming with speed, packed up with speed and went in the opposite direction—the fastest way out of that country.

"Hmh," was all that Howard said, and flushed under his pale skin.

"We can overtake him," said King pointedly. "If you want to overtake him."

"In how long?"

"Plenty of time. He's got six weeks of going round west of the swamp to Nairobi. I've just got to go east to introduce Yakoub among some of the Atbara tributary chiefs. But we can still short cut him and catch up before Nairobi."

Howard smiled slowly, a hard little smile while his big fingers tensed in his lap.

"Yes," he said. "I'd like to catch up. In six weeks I shall be strong enough. Is it possible for us to start tomorrow?"

"Sure, why not? We'll rig you a hammock until you can walk."

"Splendid. Now tell me, what can I give this good witch doctor—and your Masai fellow too? They've both saved my life."

"Oh, some gimcrackery or other." King laughed. "And you can give Barounggo a cow for his father; he can't own anything under their patriarchal system."

Suddenly Howard laughed too.

"But I'm a pauper. I've got nothing in all Africa but a torn shirt and a pair of shorts—and the friendship of Kingi *bwana.* But I tell you what I'll do; and don't you argue me about it, because I'm a weak man and sick. I'll send out for this sorcerer the biggest assortment of magic gadgets, illusions, er—hallucinations—that Chicago can produce; and for your Masai fifty head of good stock. And I'll hire you, you damned proud Westerner, to bring the things out and deliver them."

A slow grin began to break over King's face. It spread till his eyes disappeared in their slits and his mouth cut a gash parallel with them.

"Well," he agreed. "It'll be a holiday

for once with no helpless tenderfoot to lead by the hand. And I guess I'll have earned it; because, take it on my sacredest oath, it's going to be one big safari man's chore to get this outfit out of here and feed us and all those *shenzies* on no more ammunition than Yakoub's piece of galvanized pipe." He twisted a rueful face. "I was a fathead over that box; but I thought I'd be able to draw on your battery."

Kaffa, squatting in the sun in ready attendance upon his master, expending an immense energy over the useless polishing of his cook pots, caught the word ammunition, and with it the look on King's face.

He fell to squirming and hiding behind his own shoulders while he looked all over the landscape with an expression of agonized virtue; till King demanded—

"What ill thought eats you up, apeling?"

The little man writhed.

"*Bwana,* in the matter of ammunition, a few cartridges we still have."

King was skeptical.

"Hunh? Where have we a few cartridges?"

"*Bwana,* that box that was heavier than it used to be."

King was quickly stern.

"Kaffa. It was an order."

The Hottentot twisted in an extremity of confession.

"Yes, *bwana,* it was an order. It was obeyed. I took it to a steep place in a far *donga* and threw it down, though my heart was water within me. But the spirits of that *donga,* who are good spirits, broke that box when it fell; and, looking down, I saw that cartridges speckled the rocks. So—since it was an omen—I went down with a great difficulty, though I was afraid of the spirits; and in three hours of searching I collected one hundred and thirty and seven cartridges. But four of them are bent and will not fit in the gun, and I have been afraid to mend them with the hammer."

King's frown was still on his face. Howard, wincing under his own contorted efforts to keep a straight face, said—

"And for that supreme imp I shall send out a specially tailored full bandmaster's uniform."

So it was that many days later King paraded through Deputy Commissioner Fawcett's headquarters with a jaunty air and with a well fed and contented safari; and Fawcett had them in to dinner and congratulated Howard on his physical condition. And Howard laughed and flexed his big arms and said that there was nothing like open air travel in that East African climate to build a man up fit to fight for his life; and it had all been a mistake anyhow about that witch casting yarn; the wizard, in fact, was a very good fellow who had no dealings with the affairs of white men.

And then they went on their way swiftly to reach Nairobi before six weeks should pass.

But when King, on his way back, met the deputy commissioner, that wise person said with a blank seriousness—

"Oh, by the way, I heard that one of your people got badly mauled by something."

And King brazenly replied:

"Why yes, I told you. A lion clawed him up quite a lot."

"I don't mean that one," said Fawcett, straight faced. "I mean the doctor man. They tell me he got into Nairobi a frightful mess, his clothes in rags, bruised and limping, and with a broken jaw or something."

King's face tried to express concern, but the light in his eyes was one of a very pleasing reminiscence.

"Sounds like something surely must have lit right into him," he said, and he rolled the words in his mouth as though they tasted good.

The deputy commissioner quite needlessly shook hands with him.

"Old humbug—" he laughed—"come on in to dinner."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A NOTE from General de Nogales on various hazards—animal, vegetable and human—of his native Venezuela:

London, England

I hope you won't object to having one of your Writers' Brigade offer a bit of comment on one of your stories. Especially since in this case it happens to be laid in my own native land. The story in question was Arthur O. Friel's "Bush Devils" (May 1st issue). I was interested also in the author's Camp-fire note in which he said "he hopes it won't embroil him in any 'word war.'" I'd like to commend Mr. Friel on both the story and the note.

Mr. Friel's statements about scorpions, snakes, Brazilian renegades, Guianan pork-knockers and the like are correct, for those pests actually do exist along our Guianan-Venezuelan borderline. He is equally right when he mentions that those pork-knockers hate the Venezuelans, because the Venezuelans usually make short process of them when they catch them monkeying around west of the borderline.

What Mr. Friel has to say about diamonds is actually true. I have seen in Caracas numerous beautifully cut diamonds which have been brought down from that region, where they are frequently found in paying quantities by the native prospectors, who pan them out much the same as we used to pan out gold dust and nuggets in the creek beds of Alaska.

IN THE forests of the Guianan-Venezuelean borderline exist numerous varieties of scorpions whose sting causes paralysis, dangerous infections of the blood and frequently even death, according to the state of health of the victim. In those forests not only the scorpions and snakes are poison-

ous, but even various kinds of trees. For instance, 'tis said about one kind that it causes a man to swell up sometimes to twice his normal size, if he happens to lie down to sleep in its shade.

Snake bites cause quick or slow death according to whether the snake in question belongs to the family of vipers or not, since the poison of vipers affects not the blood, as is the case with the ordinary poisonous snakes, but the nervous system, occasioning convulsions, and nine times out of ten, violent death. We have in Venezuela among other freak snakes one called *mata caballo*, or "horse killer" snake, whose poison won't affect the cattle. A man who has been bitten by it usually survives, but for mules, horses and donkeys its poison means instant death.

The poison used by our Indians on their arrowheads and blowpipe darts is called *curare*. Nobody has yet been able to find out its ingredients, since that is a secret which passes down from father to son among their witch-doctors.

TYPES of Brazilian renegades as the one mentioned by Mr. Friel are not uncommon along our Guianan-Amazon borderline. They are regular fiends, who incite the Indians to all sorts of mischief, including wholesale murder.

I may as well add, for the benefit of the professional "word war" heroes, that sharks and alligators not only attack but actually devour human beings, because I have seen them do it. If any one should doubt it, all he has got to do is to take a bath in a jungle stream, or in the Caribbean, near Cabo Tiburon, in Southern Panama. That would cure his doubt.

One thing I did not know, although I suspected it, is that pythons eat *cristianos*. I was interested, therefore, when I read in the Sept. 15th issue Mr. David J. P. Breen's statement to the effect that he had shot a seventeen-foot long rock-python which had just swallowed a black child of eighteen months. If a giant anaconda, some of which reach the length of twenty-five to thirty feet, can swallow a donkey, a deer or even a half-grown cow, why should it not be able to swallow a child?

—RAFAEL DE NOGALES

IMPROVING the culture of some of our less "civilized" brothers through the medium of the motion pictures.

Weedsport, New York

The article by Captain Mansfield, "Singular Cinés," in the September first *Adventure*, brought to memory one such movie I attended in the Philippines. It was about twenty years ago, on one of my several visits to these much discussed islands, and the city was Dagupin in northern Luzon.

Dagupin was quite a sophisticated city even at that time, and boasted a cinema of parts. It was housed in the ruins of an old Spanish godown with thick, massive walls. The roof was long gone and the need was supplied by a huge tarpaulin supported by a ridgepole. The seats were bamboo poles on risers, where the proletariat perched in happiness, if not in comfort. Box seats were provided for the elect on a raised platform also of bamboo, but supplied with chairs. The lighting came from a dynamo with a unique power plant. The rear axle of a Ford was jacked up, with a pulley attached driving a belt to the dynamo. The music was the rattle of the Ford engine. I occupied a box seat with the constabulary officer, whose guest I was, along with several other Americanos.

The highly educational film was, "The Crime, Trial and Escape of Harry Thaw". The audience shouted loudly when Harry got his man, and the show was going good until Part II came in bottom side up. Loud howls from the pit soon stopped the machine, and a change was made but not for the better, as it was wrong end too. While this was being fixed, the belt ran off the dynamo and we were in darkness. Pandemonium broke loose and the audience acted just like a civilized one back home where this lovely film had been created. As soon as light came, Part II continued. When Harry escaped, enthusiasm ran wild. He had them with him to a man, even if they did not know what it was all about.

PRIMITIVE people react strongly to a picture, and in their excitement become a part of the drama. They riot during a fight, and sit quietly during the love scenes. I recall such an incident at a cinema in Georgetown, British Guiana, which I attended with a resident of that city. We sat in a gallery, while the pit was filled with negroes and indios. It was a slush picture, during which a woman, defending her honor, staged a terrific battle with the villain. The pit became a riot, and the mêlée continued until the scene changed. My friend said it was the usual thing whenever there was a fight shown.

That such is not always the case was shown in Rotorura, New Zealand. There were a large number of Maoris present. The film was founded on the life and adventures of Pancho Villa, so contained some hectic moments, but there was no excitement. What a mess to put before a group of people, and give them the idea that it portrays life in America!

AFTER the Spanish-American war many military and naval bands called at the various ports of Japan and China and they all played, "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight". The natives got the idea that it was our national air, so every bunch of brass that got together and could toot, straightway learned to play "Hot Time". During one trip I heard it played accompanying every cinema I saw while in China and Japan.

Filipinos are wonderful musicians and play good music. Speaking of the Philippines again, I wonder if Captain Mansfield or C. A. Freeman ever ran across the "Deacon" who operated a freighting outfit from Dagupin. He was an old soldier who had stayed after his discharge and gone native. His yarns were worth listening to. There was another queer one who traveled around Luzon selling jewelry. I never met him but heard many stories of his career.

—CHARLES C. TEALL

FRANK J. SCHINDLER, who sees a bit of humor in most things, does not choose to except the albatross:

Berwyn, Illinois

Getting to the back of the book, I found Bill Adams' queries about the albatross. From what I have seen of them, there is a smaller variety that follows ships from Frisco to Alaska. Those are the black footed variety. Darwin mentions those in his opus, "Voyage around the World." But as for the entire clan, they are sea scavengers; something akin to the buzzards of land areas; and they bray like a jackass, which Bill probably knows. They are really denizens of the region of the Cape of Good Hope, where I saw one that had a wing spread of seventeen feet. However, they have been found as far north as Tampa, Florida. How far north they will fly probably depends on their particular beer and skittles, in other words, if they find plenty of food to their liking they may follow along. When young, the albatross is of a sooty or brown color, but when matured it is white with black wings. There may be slight variations in them, just as there are in fox terriers with black spots or a calico horse. Nature hasn't quite learned to so standardize her creatures that they all, of one variety, look like Princess Eugenie hats. It's probably better so, and more power to Nature.

Howsomever, if they come as far north as Florida, which is somewhere in Lat. 30 N., then they probably go beyond Pitcairn, which is right on the Tropic of Capricorn. Even though they are prodigious flyers, I think they prefer to stick close to landed areas, and that is why you won't see many of them much north of Pitcairn. Coming east, the island of Ducie is about the last rock you touch before hitting S. A; and north from Pitcairn, Henderson, and Ducie, up to San Francisco is about 5,000 miles of fresh air; about 60 degrees due north to the nearest land. And about 60 degrees east to the nearest land, not taking into account the islands of San Felix and Ambrosio. So, if they are not often found north of Pitcairn, there is probably a good reason for it. In short, the League of Nations ought to build landing stages and rest houses for them. Write to your Congressman.

—FRANK J. SCHINDLER

QUOTING an interesting bit from a note by Frederick Hopkins, several of whose whaling stories you have read in our pages:

" . . . Many shipmasters believe that whales 'sing'. Captain Kelley was the first to perceive and act upon it, when in 1882 he was lying at anchor under Indian Point. Following the 'singing,' he reached and captured several of the whales. The 'singing' of a bowhead is said to begin on the musical tone F, to rise to C and to swing back again to F. Whalemen believe it to be a signal, or a call. They say the whales tell each other when the Straits are free of ice and the way is open to the Ocean . . . "

—FREDERICK HOPKINS

A LETTER from a reader about Commander Ellsberg's recent novelette, in our pages, "Cargo to Newcastle" (September 1st issue):

Seattle, Washington

I have read Commander Ellsberg's various stories with a great deal of interest, "On the Bottom," "Pigboats," and others. But in his last story, "Cargo to Newcastle," he has muffed a couple.

First, on Page 10: "when a motor sailer carrying the *American Consul* . . . shot alongside of the *Ulysses*." This event taking place in San Juan, Porto Rico. Since when has Porto Rico become a foreign country?

Then again, the navigation: On a vessel of this size one could expect four deck officers. All of them take their sights and check with the master. Though the usual practise is that the second mate is the navigation officer.

Do you think for a second that with four navigators aboard checking the ship's progress continually by dead reckoning, then this position by various observations, they could have overshot their landfall so far as to be somewhere off Helgoland? I do not, and I have been master of steam for a great many years.

—FRANCIS MORGAN

Here is the Commander's reply:

Westfield, New Jersey

The editor of *Adventure* has forwarded me your letter of Sept. 8, and I wish to thank you for your kind words about some of my previous stories.

With respect to "Cargo to Newcastle," I'll cer-

tainly have to apologize to all hands for the "boner" about having an American consul in an American possession like Porto Rico. Any schoolboy should have known better.

However, the situation about the navigation on the *Ulysses* is, I think, logical enough. You must remember that at that time the Navy colliers were in a transition period from the old Naval Auxiliary Service, which generally followed merchants' practise, to the regular Navy in theory. On most ships, merchant officers were trying to adapt themselves to a system of Naval rules and regulations with which they were not familiar. In the particular instance of the *Ulysses*, the story was set up with an unusually strong willed captain, a set of weak kneed and incompetent officers (except *Blake*), and at the time when the captain actually took the ship off her normal course, the ship herself was half a wreck, the chief engineer was dead, the first officer was laid up with a broken shoulder. It is not implausible to assume that under these circumstances, if the captain didn't wish them to (and I stated the captain was taking all the watches himself) he could keep the second and third officers so busy cleaning up wreckage and trying to trim cargo that paying attention to the navigation would have been the last thing that interested them; the more so as the captain, instead of insisting on their checking (as a captain normally would), specifically told them not to bother and to try to get the vessel shipshape.

Generally speaking, both on Naval vessels and merchant ships, the officers follow pretty closely the routine the captain wants, even if it differs from their regulations. If they don't like it, they may object and press their objection after port is made, but they'll generally acquiesce till that voyage is over.

NOW if you think that it is inconceivable that *Captain Bergstrom* on the *Ulysses* would have held the navigation in his own hands and taken the ship toward Helgoland without some of his still uninjured officers catching him up, I'd like to point out that leaving the navigation altogether to the captain when he insists is not unheard of in the Navy. You may remember some years ago when about seven destroyers in squadron formation piled up one behind the other on Point Honda out on your coast. To the merchant captain that seemed inconceivable; even if the leading ship was wrong, one of the ships following should have checked position enough to discover that instead of being well offshore, they were heading for the rocks when they made a turn to port.

But the reason for that accident, so far as a court-martial could determine, was the squadron commander was navigating for the whole squadron, and all the other ships knew it; they didn't check the radio compass bearings because the squadron commander had them doing something else. They probably didn't bother with the navigation much anyway, because the squadron commander said he was tending to it, and if any of them got a check which showed that perhaps the squadron commander was wrong, not one of them had nerve enough to tell him so. And they wrecked seven ships and lost twenty-five lives.

Any rational seaman, beforehand, would have thought one crazy to suggest that such a thing could happen with over eight destroyer captains and their navigators all supposed to be checking position as they ran south from San Francisco. And that's the difficulty: What officers are supposed to do, and what they actually do when the captain insists on their doing something else, don't always jibe.

—EDWARD ELLSBERG

On the point of an American consul at Porto Rico, I rather hate to have Commander Ellsberg shouldering the blame. In his case it's just one of those impossible errors which one could never commit, but which nonetheless do happen. For us of the staff I can find no such excuse, and we blush to admit not one of us noticed the slip. I won't say it caught us all napping, for the reason was probably just the reverse—we just got too interested in the story . . .

SOME information supplementary to our recent Ask Adventure biography of Ahmet, King of the Albanians:

Mansfield, Missouri

May I enlarge slightly upon Mr. Robert Swan Townsend's reply to the question, "What is the background of King Zogu of Albania?" in *Adventure* for Sept. 15? Mr. Townsend says, "A year or so ago a young man by the name of Zog was elected president."

Ahmet Zogolli was born at Borelli in the Mati. The Mati is a tribal division of Albania which his family has dominated since the 14th century. Geographically it is a high, rich agricultural plateau, protected by mountains. Its subjection to Turkey was nominal.

When Ahmet was nine, his father died. His older brother, jealous of the boy's popularity, sent him as a hostage-guest to the court of Abdul Hamid, where he was educated.

At the outbreak of the First Balkan War, Ahmet, then sixteen, escaped from Constantinople and fled secretly to the Mati. On his arrival the Mati chiefs repudiated his brother, who was friendly to the Serbs, and Ahmet led the Mati in war against Serbs and Montenegrins. He kept the war entirely in enemy territory. The Mati was the only

uninvaded part of Albania when in 1912 (Nov. 28, Albanian Independence Day) Ahmet with other chiefs joined Ishmael Kemal Pasha Vlora at Vlora (Valona); they raised the flag of Scanderbeg and proclaimed an Albanian republic.

AHMET was one of the men who drafted the Constitution of Lushnija. In 1922 he was Minister of the Interior. He saved the republic during the rebellion of March, 1922, when all other members of the government fled, and in April 1922 he became Prime Minister and virtual dictator.

At that time he dropped the Turkish termination of his family name (Zog-ogli) and signed himself, Ahmet Zogu. (Zog means "bird", and is freely translated "hawk".)

The Fan Noli revolution began in an attempt to assassinate him, and six months later (Christmas, 1925) he ended the Fan Noli regime by returning from Belgrade. The country rose to welcome him. He was thereafter president—in effect, dictator—until he became king.

I PRESENT these facts baldly, in the hope that you can give a small space to them. To understand Albania politically, it is necessary to understand that Ahmet Zogu has been the dominating force in that country since 1922.

Mr. Townsend is of course correct in what he says, though a little vague as to dates, but I don't feel that he said enough to make the facts quite clear. My own home is in Albania, and some years ago I knew Ahmet quite well, but I don't know why he calls himself King Zog. "Zogu" is the definite form; Zog the indefinite, and whatever else the king may be, he is never indefinite. Of course what he should style himself is "King Ahmet."

—ROSE WILDER LANE

Postscript:

If I had a little more space I would say that I don't agree with Mr. Townsend about the Albanian language. I should say, not that the article is attached to the noun, but that the language has no article, in the English sense. (It has an article, unique to it, which appears between noun and adjective, indicating gender and number.) Nouns are declined in two modes: definite and indefinite. Albanian is the oldest known Indo-European language, and like all primitive languages, it is extremely complicated in structure: A noun has 32 forms, and there are 132 forms of the possessive pronoun. There are four principal declensions of nouns. The indefinite, in all eight cases, is used in such sentences as, "Birds (nom. indef. pl.) have wings." "Songs of birds (gen. indef. pl.) are musical." The definite is used in, "He shot the bird (acc., def., sing.)", "He said to the bird (dat., def., sing.), 'Guard this treasure.'"

It is obvious that the form, "Ahmet Zogu," is correct; *i.e.*, Ahmet, the Bird (Hawk)". The king is, I believe, the first to use such a form as "King Zog." The indefinite sense is not in harmony with the exclusive and emphatically definite sense of a personal name or title. Ahmet's original title was of course, "Ahmet Zogu, Bey Mati," and he was called Ahmet Bey. His present title in Albanian is, "Ahmet Zogu, Mbret Shqiptareve." (King of the Albanians; "Shqiptareve" being genitive, definite, plural.)

He has evidently sanctioned for European use the form, "King Zog." This is perhaps to avoid the Turkish connotations of the name Ahmet, or Achmet, Achmed. The Albanians, an Indo-European people, are sensitive about being confused with Central Asian peoples. They held the frontiers of Europe against invading Slavs, Huns and Turks until they were overpowered in the 14th and 15th centuries, and in this attempt at a renascence of their race and country they wish Europe and America to understand that they are a European people. Eastern peoples have never been in any doubt about that fact.

OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Neptune

HOW and when did the ancient equatorial custom of meeting Father Neptune originate?

Request:—"This ship having crossed down under the Line some few days past, the question comes up among the sea lawyers aboard as to how and when the custom of entering the Domain of Neptunus Rex was first celebrated.

Perchance an old-timer like yourself can give us some info on the subject, or any unusual crossings you may have in mind or at your command.

If so, any dope you can pass on to a few of Uncle Sam's tars who have been tried and found worthy to be considered as trusty shellbacks, will be greatly appreciated."

—C. R. KELLY, U. S. S. *MacLeish*, Asiatic Squadron

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—When your Battle Fleet steamed around the world—or was it only to Australia?—in 1925, the U. S. S. *California* put out a remarkable booklet on the cruise, and among other things featured the Neptune ceremony. Before sailing, Ensign Brendel wrote to me asking much the same questions as you ask, so that they might have all available data. They also asked several other old salts, with no better luck. I can only quote my reply to them, published in the book along with the photograph of the Neptune Certificate:

"After so long a delay I am ashamed to answer your letter, since I can only confess my inability to supply the information you seek. As long as I can remember, the Neptune ceremony has been 'old'; and old men who were (to me) very old when I sailed in my first ship in 1889 claimed to have suffered the same ordeal when they were boys, at the hands of other old, old men who claimed etc., etc., and so forth interminably. No source that I have found pretends to reveal the origin of the rite. To describe it is only to describe one form of it, since it varied as widely as chanteys vary. Whether Noah invented it to get even with Ham for broaching liquor stores, or whether Jonah told it to the whale to make him laugh and throw up his passenger, I can not tell you. Luck to you."

I can only say, therefore—sorry.

Moccasin

THE passing of the Indian has left a poor white man without a pair of slippers.

Request:—"You dispense so much otherwise inaccessible information that I wonder if you can tell me where I can procure a pair of buckskin moccasins.

I don't mean the sheepskin kind made in Eastern factories and sold at resorts from which the real article, including Indians, has long since disappeared. I mean a pair of moccasins made in old time Indian fashion, that come up around the ankle where they are tied with thongs that are cut integral with the shoe.

I have worn a pair around the house for more than twenty years, having bought them in the North when Indians were Indians and their products genuine. There must be some kind redskin left somewhere who will sell a poor white man a pair of slippers."—STERLING BEESON, Toledo, Ohio

Reply, by Mr. H. F. Robinson:—It is almost impossible to get the buckskin moccasins such as you desire, for several reasons: The Indians do other and more remunerative work; buckskin is almost impossible to get. An Indian is willing to give from $30 to $40 for a good skin and wants to use it for himself.

For Navajo moccasins with rawhide soles you might try Mike Kirk, Indian Trader, Manuelita, N. M. He might be able to have a pair made for you. Cost would be $5 or more.

For Mescalero Apache, try Prude Mercantile Co., Mescalero, New Mexico.

Mamba

AFRICA'S racing snake, which is both large and venomous.

Request:—"At different times in *Adventure* I have seen mention of the mamba. I have looked in vain for it in the dictionaries. So I am writing you for information.

Will it attack man without provocation? Can it move faster than a horse can run? Is it as large as a large boa constrictor? Is it found in the same locality as the latter—and how is it distinguished from it in appearance?"

—H. B. BOICE, Balsam, North Carolina

Reply, by Mr. Karl P. Schmidt:—The mambas are entirely confined to Africa. There are three or four species. There is a widespread belief that these snakes will attack man with or without provocation, and such attack probably does occur; but at least nine times out of ten a mamba will try to escape when approached, to judge from the experience of my mamba collecting friends. There seems to be no very accurate information about their speed, but to judge from their form and size, as well as from report, they must be as swift as our racers and whipsnakes, some of which can certainly move along as fast as a horse can run.

The black mamba reaches a length of fourteen feet. This is about the length of a boa constrictor, but the mamba would be only about one-third the diameter of the boa. True boa constrictors are found only in the Americas, but this name is often loosely applied to other large constricting snakes, such as the African pythons. The pythons are stout bodied and crossbarred, while the mambas are slender and uniformly colored.

The venom of these snakes is exceptionally potent, and their large size and correspondingly large supply of poison adds to the danger from their bite. There is an interesting case of self-inoculation with mamba venom reported in a recent number of the bulletin of the Antivenin Institute of America, the files of which are my principal source of general information about mambas.

Falcon

TRAINING is mainly through the appetite—which means lots of raw meat at just the right time.

Request:—"Kindly send me information regarding the rearing and training of falcons. Also advise me where I can obtain a young falcon, either in this country or England."

—J. C. LONG, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Davis Quinn:—It is not easy to reduce to the limited space allotted to the answer of your inquiry, the volumes that have been written on the rearing and training of hawks. Although I will attempt to cover some of the high points sketchily, by all means consult some of the extensive literature available at almost any library before you shoulder the responsibilities of this fascinating but patience-trying sport.

If you start with young hawks before they can fly, rear them in an outhouse, in a box or basket of straw set off the ground on a low pole, with a board or perch on top for the birds to climb out on for exercise and for feeding. Feed an abundance of best raw beefsteak and fresh-killed birds. Teach your hawks to accustom the sound of your voice with the act of feeding. As the birds grow they will leave the nest to fly and play on the wing, but should always return for feeding. This is a crucial period in the training, and a bird failing to return must be snared (with box-trap or bow-net) and forthwith broken to the hood in a manner presently described. The others will eventually be broken in the same way, but it is well to allow young hawks their liberty as long as possible, particularly to give them an opportunity to taste of prey of their own instinctive killing, before hooding.

Next step is to teach them to know the lure (leather, or feathers, or a bird's wing, with meat attached; or a dead bird—either of which is attached to a string), and to come to it from greater and greater distances. Next, teach the bird to "wait on". Allow it loose in a field and when it reaches a considerable height and is watching, let loose a pigeon. After two or three pigeons have been taken easily thus the bird learns to

mount eagerly for such game and wait on (hover around patiently) till it is produced. Better start with prey heavy enough to pull your hawk down, lest it develop a tendency to carry off the prey—a bad habit to break.

If your training starts with a grown bird it is more difficult. Rufter hood your bird and provide it with jesses, swivel, leash and bell. Carry it about thus constantly every day, on a heavily gloved hand. Stroke it with a feather or a wing, lightly at first. When you have ceased carrying it about for the night, tie it to a perch (a padded pole 4 feet with a canvas screen underneath) in a dark room with blinds well down to exclude morning light.

DRAW a piece of beefsteak over the bird's feet, brushing its legs with a wing, and when it nods slip a chunk into its mouth. A sound or low whistle uttered by yourself at the instant of feeding soon accustoms the bird to associate this utterance with food. When it will bend to the utterance and manifests other signs of approaching tameness, change to an ordinary easy-fitting hood—preferably a used one—and remove to a totally dark room. Now admit a gleam of light when feeding and after bird has grasped its food gently slip hood off, but replace it soon again before bird has finished eating. Feed next meal with hood on. Next day remove hood as above during two meals, with a little more light allowed, and so forth till your hawk is gradually broken to feed in broad daylight and suffer hood to be placed and removed without apprehension.

It is now time to accustom your bird to the presence of other persons and to dogs. Carry it about, first at night under feeble light, then gradually break to more light and finally daylight. Up to this point you should feed non-pellet-forming lean beefsteak, but it is now time to feed pigeons and other birds—whole—which of course will give rise to the pellets that are cast up naturally by all hawks and owls. The first times do not feed birds later than 4 P.M. Then tie your hawk to perch and unhood for night. At 8 A.M. enter with feeble light and if pellet is cast take hawk to your fist and give a bite of food and rehood. If not cast, come in and do this later, when it is cast.

NOW teach it to learn the shout that is used to call it in the field, and to jump to your fist for food, the shout being used each time it is fed. This accomplished, acquaint your bird with the lure: kneel down, gently unhood your hawk with the lure two or three feet away. While it is eating the lure, induce the bird back to your fist with a more tempting morsel of meat. All this while it will have been on leash, but now when your bird suffers you to walk around it while feeding without evidencing disturbance, secure a light stout cord to the leash and let another person unhood the hawk which should come five or ten yards to where you stand shouting and casting out the lure.

When the bird comes thirty yards thus without hesitation, increase distance gradually till—the bird given its liberty—it will come 1,000 yards.

Now teach it to stoop at the lure. Snatch the lure away as your hawk swerves by; it will return for a second trial immediately; practise this with the bird till it can take the lure finally from any angle of approach on wing. It is now time to try it after live quarry, tame or domestic birds at first, then such as a crow or heron freed from captivity and a bit sluggish, and gradually to wilder and faster birds. Take every care now to provide excellent wind and weather conditions in these first trials and to give your hawk every advantage.

All through the training period and after, the most essential thing is to keep your bird in topnotch condition. Training hawks, as other wild animals, is mainly through the appetite, but patience, gentleness and care count for more than much. And don't ever starve your bird beyond the normal hunger it might endure in nature between feedings. Guide your training by the individual temper, disposition and constitution of each bird. Always feed the best meat obtainable—never tainted—and alternated often with fresh-killed pigeons or other birds—feathers and all.

FEMALE hawks are invariably larger and more powerful than males of the same species, and so are more in favor with the falconer.

For your field work, it is best ordinarily to use a dog, and let your hawk go when the dog points, flushing the bird when your hawk reaches a proper pitch for a spectacular stoop or chase. Hawks are among the most vigorous of the whole animal kingdom and require a great deal of exercise to keep fit. For proof of this, witness the shabby, dilapidated and short-lived specimens in the confinement of an aviary.

Mr. Bally, a dealer in wild animals, now at the Zoological Park in Philadelphia, has a peregrine and a goshawk for sale, I understand. These are species—especially the former—generally popular among falconers.

Fencing

SOME of the rougher thrusts.

Request:—"I am interested in fencing and would like to know the following:

1. How can I disarm an opponent?

2. Is hacking or cutting or slashing as if using a saber allowed?"

—RUSSELL CAMPLAIN, Pottsville, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Capt. Jean V. Grombach:—1. There are several ways in which an opponent's blade may be forced or knocked out of his grasp. By

a very quick beat; that is sharply striking an opponent's blade with your own. Still another way is by a rapid envelopment, or bind, which sort of wraps up the other blade and leverages it out of direction or control. This is done by a circular motion with your own blade either from above, (an overbind), or from below (an underbind). Both a beat and a bind have as their main purpose the throwing of the opponent's point out of line and the opening up of an avenue for your own thrust. Sometimes, however, when sharply done on an unwary opponent the result is a disarmament.

2. Hacking, cutting—or slashing as you put it—are allowed in saber fencing and count the same as a point touch. However, in épée and foil, this is not allowed and if done does not count as a touch.

West

CENTER-FIRE or double rig?

Request:—"We have never ridden a horse since we were boys and never intend to if it can be avoided. This particular argument concerns cowboys, and ropes.

Mr. Lawrence says: 'No first class cowboy, no matter from whence he comes, ever ties his rope fast to the saddle.' Mr. Sweem (me) says the reverse. We have agreed to abide by your decision in this matter."

—M. O. SWEEM, Placerville, California

Reply, by Mr. F. W. Egeiston—Speaking as a former Montana cowpoke, I would say that you were absolutely wrong in your contention as to tying hard and fast.

However, in certain benighted sections of the country, particularly throughout the Southwest, this pernicious practise is universally followed.

The Northwestern cowboy uses a three-quarter or center-fire saddle and takes his dallies. The Southwesterner uses the double rig and ties hard and fast.

Of course, you find "Tehanos" in the North with their favorite rigs and ideas and also Northerners in the South using their single rigs and dallies, but it all depends where each did his early riding.

While I am not certain as to the why and wherefore, I am rather under the impression that the Southwestern mode is suited to an open country, where no trees, rocks, steep declivities or underbrush are to be encountered. Hence, as they say down there, they never tie on to anything if they want to let loose of it.

I know I have had several occasions to be mighty glad I could loose my rope and what was on the other end of it to prevent a nasty spill. On one occasion my cinch broke and I believe I hold all records for altitude and short distance flight.

Radio

A MIDGET battery set for idle hours aboard a tanker.

Request:—"As a means of relieving the monotony of my present existence, I am contemplating the purchase of a baby-grand radio receiver.

However, there are difficulties which no one on the ship seems to have reliable information upon, so you would be of great service if you could tell me for certain whether a Crosley Midget receiver is built for direct current use, or if one could be converted to D. C.

Also whether the fact that the set would be plugged in 200 feet or so from the generator would affect the operation of the set, and, if so, whether there is a means of eliminating interference.

True, we have a wireless operator on the ship, but he doesn't know enough to repair his own set.

As I am 8-12 quartermaster on a tank steamer, I seldom get much daylight shore leave, and what little I do get can't be spent looking over radio shops, so any info on the subject you can give will be sincerely appreciated."

—MICHAEL J. TOMICK, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Donald McNicol:—Some of the fellows on tankers and tramps are getting good service from Crosley Midget sets which use 2-volt tubes and air-cell dry batteries. The batteries are good for 6 months. With this outfit you are independent of the ship's electric current and the generator, commutator ripple does not bother reception. Atwater Kent also makes a receiver about the same as the Crosley Midget for 2-volt tubes.

State Police

IN MASSACHUSETTS the trooper must have knowledge of the geography, history, factories and celebrities of his State.

Request:—"I am very much interested in Massachusetts State Police work and if possible would appreciate any information you could send me in regard to it."

—LOUIS B. TRACY, Taunton, Massachusetts

Reply, by Mr. Francis H. Bent:—Applicant for Massachusetts State Police must be between 21 and 40 years old; not less than 5 feet 7 inches tall; weigh in accordance to the standard table of weight for age and height; and be of good moral character. Residents of the State are given preference in making appointments. Physical examination is very rigid. Written examination must show a complete knowledge of denser populated portions of the State; where large mills are located and what is manufactured; where people of various nationalities may be found in large

numbers; knowledge of rivers, highways, electric and steam railways, harbors, etc. Also must know past and present history of State and prominent people of same.

Enlistment is for two years. First six months are on probation during which time the trooper may be summarily discharged. After this charges must be preferred and proven in court-martial before he may be discharged except at his own request.

Pay is $1,200 with uniforms, arms, equipment, board and lodging furnished by the State. Troopers live in barracks. Troopers carry on patrols and general police duties in the maintenance of law and order throughout the State. Recruits are sent to training school for two months before being placed on regular patrol duty. Here they receive instruction in physical training and personal hygiene; riding and care of horses; use of weapons; mob psychology and control; handling of traffic; and extensive course in criminal and police court laws in accordance with the laws of Massachusetts; and police methods and customs.

Panama

TAKING pictures in the tropics.

Request:—"I am planning to go to Panama to spend the four hottest months of the year exploring and prospecting. I should like to take some pictures.

What would you suggest as an outfit which would be very light and stand rough use?"

—CORTLAND PEARSALL, Malden, Massachusetts

Reply, by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—You're going into a bad country for photographic work, on account of heat, humidity and insects—the three worst enemies of the photographer. You will have to take extreme precautions against them. I would suggest a No. 3 Kodak, with the fastest lens you can afford, a light metal tripod and a Kodak ray filter. A supply of Kodak Verichrome film, each roll placed in its individual tin box, and sealed either with solder or with surgeon's (not electrician's) adhesive tape. A Burroughs, Wellcome Notebook and Exposure Table, and a supply of B. W. Amidol tabloids for developing. A supply of Kodak Acid Fixing Powder. A Kodak developing tank, a thermometer, a stirring rod, and a hard rubber or porcelain-lined tray about 8x10 or 11x14 for fixing, because you'll ruin your developing tank if you put acid hypo into it. Clips for hanging the films up to dry, and a light wooden or metal frame covered with cheesecloth or fine net to slip over the films while drying, to keep insects away. (You'll have to make this last yourself.)

Don't attempt to do any printing until you get back, but develop each film pretty promptly after exposure—say, within twenty-four hours—and don't leave partly exposed films in the camera very long—not more than a day or two. If you use up a film, and can't develop it at once, don't seal it up again; just roll it and stick it in the usual way. You'll have trouble keeping your solutions down to a possible temperature, but it must be done—how, you'll have to figure out for yourself when you get there.

Revolver

QUICK draw from a belt holster:

Request:—"Will you please inform me as to the best way to make a quick right-hand draw and snapshot of a revolver from a belt holster?"

—RAYMOND P. WALLACE, Oakland, California

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—Have the holster, an open-top one, so designed and made that the revolver muzzle hangs slightly to the rear of the vertical line of the front of the holster as hung on the belt, on a rather loose belt; some tie the bottom of the holster down, but I never do. I don't wear ordinarily wear a belt holster, anyhow, preferring the shoulder spring type.

Facing your mark, standing with your weight on both feet, drop the crotch of the hand over the grip of the revolver, wrapping the last three fingers about the butt as you draw it, and your finger will naturally drop into the trigger-guard. Cock the gun, if it's a single action, by drawing back the hammer spur as it comes to the level of your mark; or if using a double action, just point it with a thrusting motion, and pull the trigger as the gun comes level; I use both varieties in snap shooting, and find both reliable. Practise makes perfect. Use lots of ammunition and don't get discouraged.

Canoe

INSTRUCTIONS and don'ts for the amateur paddler.

Request:—"I am trying to learn how to paddle a canoe, but I have trouble keeping it straight when I try to go fast. Also, although I am over six feet, it costs me a lot of effort whenever I try to make any speed.

I would appreciate any information on the subject. Please tell, too, whether the size of the paddle is merely a matter of choice."

—EDGAR F. BELAVAL, New York City

Reply, by Mr. Edgar S. Perkins:—If you can not get an experienced canoeist to go with you, go out alone. Sit in the bow seat facing the stern, or kneel just back of the center. Face the direction you are going to sit or kneel when getting into the canoe. Don't get in and then turn around.

Use a single paddle that measures from the ground to your nose or eye. That is the best

length. Place the upper hand over the top grip of the paddle and lower hand around the shaft just above the blade.

To paddle forward: Reach out with your lower hand as far as it will go, bringing the upper hand back to the shoulder. Plunge the blade into the water, pulling back with the lower hand and pushing forward with the upper hand, bringing the blade back along the canoe, but without scraping along the outwales. Do this a couple of times; it will send canoe forward and to the side opposite the one on which you are paddling. Now take another stroke and, when your paddle is halfway back, start turning the inside of the blade up and outward while finishing your stroke. Use the upper hand assisting the lower hand in turning the paddle from the inner side outward. This is called "feathering" and, if properly done, will propel the canoe in a straight line. Practise until you have mastered this.

To make a right turn: Paddle on the left in a wide semicircle, or "feathering strong" on the right and outward.

To make a left turn: Paddle on the right side in a wide semicircle or "feather strong" on the left and outward.

To back up: Back water; that is, put your paddle in back of you and bring it forward. Reverse your forward stroke.

To make a quick turn: Back water, reaching far backward and bringing paddle far forward, then change over to the other side without stopping the movement, letting go of the paddle with the upper hand after finishing the stroke forward and when the paddle is midway in the circle across canoe take hold of the lower shaft with the upper hand and then grab the grip at the top with what was the lower hand and you are all set to begin a stroke on the opposite side. Take a wide circular stroke and you will find you have made a quick turn. With practise you can make a complete circle with these two strokes.

First Aid

WOUNDS, infections, shocks and bruises. What to do till the doctor comes.

Request:—"I'm on my way to the Dutch East Indies and would appreciate it very much if you would send me any information which you have on first aid."

—A. LESAGE, S.V.D., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Reply, by Dr. Claude P. Fordyce:—A knowledge of the principles of first aid in everyday life should be taken as a solemn responsibility. Once you come face to face with an accident which endangers yourself or a companion, you will realize how indispensable is the ability to meet the emergency which forces you alone to act. First aid is generally required before you can shift the responsibility by stepping to a telephone and acquiring the assistance of an expert who is trained in all the methods of the healing craft. First aid does not rival the physician, but simply takes his place as an emergency measure. The essentials of first aid treatment are as follows:

1. The thing to do: Keep cool. Don't get into a panic. Send for a physician. Aid him. Have the first aid kit handy. Improvise if you have to. Quiet the victim. Get him into a comfortable position. Remove the clothing gently to see the nature of the injury. Dress wounds if present. Stop bleeding if present. Restore to consciousness if needed. Transport the injured one to a place of safety if advisable.

THE first aid kit should contain bandages, sterilized gauze, absorbent cotton, adhesive plaster, burn ointment, iodine, aromatic spirits of ammonia.

Rescue methods: If one's clothing is afire, the first impulse is to run, thereby fanning the flames. The first aid method is to smother the flames by rolling the victim's body in rugs, coats, or tent.

A drowning person will always try to grasp his rescuer. Get hold of his hair and pull him ashore with your free hand paddling and feet kicking. Start artificial respiration and keep it up for hours.

In electrical injuries: You must protect yourself from the person in contact with a live wire. Insulate your hands with paper, clothing, or wood. Shut off the current if you can.

2. Bandaging. Bandages are used to hold dressings in place, apply pressure, and act as a sling. Fix a bandage by taking one or two turns around the part affected; each turn should overlap two-thirds of its predecessor. Fix the end by tying, or with adhesive plaster. In taking a bandage off, gather the slack in the hand.

3. Shock is a dangerous injury to the nervous system and often follows accidents. The victim is usually conscious, his skin is pale and cold, he is weak and drowsy.

What to do: Call a doctor, give the patient air, loosen his clothing, keep him warm. Lay him flat, head low, rub his limbs toward the body, and elevate the limbs. Stimulate with aromatic spirits of ammonia, which is the indispensable stimulant in all first aid work. It is harmless, yet powerful and is used by the Red Cross and armies of the world. If the victim can not swallow, pour some of the ammonia on a kerchief and hold below the nose. If he can swallow, give a half teaspoonful of the ammonia in a half cup of water every fifteen minutes for several doses.

Fainting: Victim is unconscious, face pale and cold. Don't get scared. Keep cool. Lay him flat, head low, dash cold water in his face or let him inhale aromatic spirits of ammonia.

4. Infection. Seventy-five per cent. of all wounds become infected (or poisoned—we "catch cold in them") if untreated. Wounds heal fast if free of germs and kept clean. Apply iodine to an open

wound at once. Cover quickly with sterilized or germ free dressing. But better leave a wound uncovered than to put on a soiled dressing.

5. Wounds: Kinds.

Lacerated: as cut by a sharp instrument.

Punctured: as pierced by glass, splinters, etc.

Bruises: skin broken and tissues underneath hurt.

Poison: as by dog or snake bite.

First aid treatment—Stop bleeding, apply iodine, cover with surgically clean dressing.

Ship

BUILT in 1917, stranded in 1923—thus the brief career of the four-master *Charlotte A. Maxwell.*

Request:—"Can you tell me anything of the *Charlotte A. Maxwell,* New York. As I know nothing concerning ships, I am unable to tell you the type, construction, or anything pertaining to her. I believe that she was a four-master.

1. When and where was it built, by whom, and at what cost?

2. To what use did its builder put it?

3. What are its present whereabouts, and who now commands it?"

—R. E. MCFALL, Minot, North Dakota

Reply, by Lieut. Harry E. Riesberg:—1. This vessel was built in 1917 at Camden, Maine, of wood, by Mr. R. L. Bean (shipbuilder). It had one deck and four masts with a gross tonnage of 668 tons, and net of 579 tons; length 167.2 ft., breadth was 35.8 ft., and depth 14.0 ft. As to its cost of construction, I am unable to ascertain just what it really did cost.

2. It was built for the carrying of cargo and always was used in service as a freight vessel only.

3. She stranded and became a total loss on False Hook Shoal about 1½ miles east of Sandy Hook, New Jersey, on March 27, 1923, at which time there were seven persons on board. No lives were lost.

Oscar H. Cramer, one of the stockholders in the vessel, was master at the time of the loss.

Discus

THE ancient Greeks threw a heavy discus, but it is unlikely that the Olympic games included the shot put.

Request:—"Are there any records about how far the ancient Greeks threw the javelin, shot and discus? Also, are there any records about the relative weights of the shot, discus and javelin as compared with those used today?"

—HERBERT LIPSITZ, Paterson, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Jackson Sholz:—I can find no record of the weight of the javelin used by the Greeks in their Olympic games, although it appears to have been a "light spear, thrown with the aid of a strap which was wrapped about the shaft, by which a rotary motion and greater distance and greater accuracy was secured."

The old Greek discus was made of bronze, probably lens-shaped, and was undoubtedly much heavier than the one we use today, inasmuch as the best throw recorded then was 95 Olympic feet. An Olympic foot is 0.32045 meters. Our modern discus weighs 4 pounds, 6½ ounces.

I can find no record that the Greeks had an event to correspond to our shot put.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month

The Fate of ANTON LEBARON

The tale of an American explorer lost in the pitiless green hell of the Amazon jungle. Begin this weird and gripping two-part story in this issue.

By ARTHUR O FRIEL

And These Other Fine Stories

THE EYE-TEETH OF O'HARA, a story of pig sticking in India, by TALBOT MUNDY; THE TRAIL FOR JOLO, a story of the Philippine Scouts, by ARED WHITE; THE ALIEN, a story of the sea, by BILL ADAMS; HORSES, a story of Morocco, by GEORGE E. HOLT; THE MARSHAL OF ORO RIO, a story of the West, by FREDERICK J. JACKSON; A LITTLE MATTER OF COURAGE, a story of the Slave Coast, by ROBERT SIMPSON; SOVEREIGN GOLD, a story of submarine warfare, by GORDON CARROLL; SANCTUARY, a story of the wilds, by F. ST. MARS; and the conclusion of FULL MOON TIDE, a novel of the Cannibal Isles, by CAPTAIN RAABE.

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The true "Zone of Youth" is in the abdominal and hip region. Sagging muscles, protruding stomach, flabby hips are signs of oncoming age, the result of having "let oneself go." Just five minutes a day with the Steelflex Health Rowboat quickly Re-Creates the "ZONE OF YOUTH" and KEEPS it youthful.

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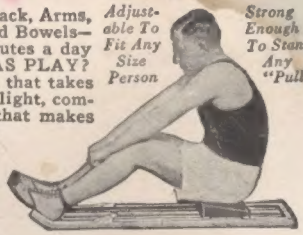

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Rolling seat brings every muscle into play. If Rowflex Health Glider is desired, place X in square in coupon. Price $11.85 at factory.

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